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Natural Asset-Based Community Development in the Nebraska Community Foundation Network

Kristen Ohnoutka

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, kohnoutka6@huskers.unl.edu

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Professional Project

Natural Asset-Based Community Development
Nebraska Community Foundation Network

Kristen Ohnoutka

For the degree:
Master of Community and Regional Planning
Community and Regional Planning Program
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Committee Members:
Dr. Yunwoo Nam, Chair
Dr. Zhenghong Tang
Dan Piatkowski

Client:
Jeff Yost, Nebraska Community Foundation

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Plan Author:

Kristen Ohnoutka, Master of Community and Regional Planning candidate

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Executive Summary

As rural communities explore new ways to stimulate growth and development in their place, one of the biggest challenges they face is reinventing what rural community development is and has been. The conventional way of thinking goes communities must attract new businesses to attract new workers to grow a community's population. However, population growth and industry attraction are not always equivalent to progress, especially not in rural communities.

For decades, rural communities have withstood the boom and bust of industry and economy, whether it be agricultural, industrial, manufacturing, etc. These industries and more have demanded the extraction of rural communities' assets, resources, and talents to be used and shipped elsewhere for the prosperity of other places. This has left many rural communities desolate and dependent upon outside forces for support. This extractive cycle not only drains rural communities of people and economic wealth but also impacts a place's overall quality of life and natural landscape.

The abundant natural resources found in rural areas have long been sources of industry and life. They often were the source of many communities' founding and first enterprises. These natural resources are what make communities rural and contribute to their identity and culture. However, what is to happen to these places when the overdevelopment and commercialization of rural landscapes take over? The extractive cycle's prevalence in rural communities has created two outcomes. The first is the morphing of rural communities into suburban or industrial places. The second is the complete abandonment of a rural community entirely due to the failure of said development. Ultimately, the extractive cycle robs rural communities of their rural identity and exploits the very source of what makes them rural – natural resources. This plan proposes a reinvention of this traditional community development practice in rural communities and hopes to help them remain rural while still progressing as a place.

Natural Asset Based Community Development (NABCD) is a unique rural community development tool that reverses the extractive cycle by intentionally investing in environmental and natural assets that are already present in a community. ***Natural assets*** are the resources naturally found in a place's physical environment. Such assets include water, soil, plants, and animals. These assets play a vital role in the economy and industry of a place and the quality of life potential of a place.

NABCD proposes that communities view their natural assets as sources for new business opportunities, people and talent recruitment, unique recreational and tourist experiences, and more. This community development approach considers the environmental, social, and cultural value of natural assets and maximizes their use and impact in rural communities. Similar to workforce development, affordable housing, business and industry recruitment, and other common community development approaches, natural assets offer their own value to the community development equation.

In this plan, two case studies will present how NABCD has been successfully applied in two communities – Norfolk, Nebraska, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Both of these communities have emphasized a natural asset in their place and invested significantly into the development of those assets. Norfolk, Nebraska in recent years, has taken significant steps toward reinvesting into their North Fork Riverfront, including a redesign that allows for white-water rafting, a reinvigorated community space in the park that abuts the river, and new commercial and residential opportunities along its banks. The results of this recent reinvestment have helped spur serious economic growth throughout the entire community. Local sales tax receipts from the years 2016 – 2021 (before the project to the present day) prove how the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project has sparked new energy in the downtown area, contributing to a significant increase in local spending and new business growth.

The next case study is a well-known, Midwest community practicing NABCD – Sioux Falls, South Dakota. This community had not always properly invested in the unique natural resources its place had to offer. However, once community leaders and the city bought into the idea of fixing up Falls Park, the city saw almost an immediate return on investment in population growth. 2020 US Census Bureau data will prove how population growth saw consistent increases over the decades as this project progressed as compared to a city of similar size in the Midwest – Lincoln, Nebraska.

The outcomes of both of these cases present data-driven results that prove how NABCD can contribute to a community's overall wealth and continued growth. These results, as well as NABCD recommendations, are presented in this plan for the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF), a non-profit, statewide community development organization that works to help rural Nebraska communities achieve their dreams through philanthropy, grant assistance, and capacity building programs, to establish the NABCD framework. In its work as a non-profit community development organization, NCF assists more than 200 Nebraska community foundations from all across the state. They provide education and training opportunities, resources, policy assistance, gift planning guides, and a virtual library full of “real-life examples of the impressive work affiliated funds are doing across the state,” (NebraskaHometowns.org, 2021). Through this support, community funds are empowered to raise local dollars for unrestricted community projects, including early childhood centers, activity centers, health and wellness facilities, as well as developing grant opportunities to support local community organizations. This place-based approach to community development is the foundation of NCF and what has made them so successful over the last 25 years. This has also made them a fitting partner to support this plan's work and promote it throughout their network of Nebraska communities.

Although NCF is focused on rural community development, currently, there is not a concentrated effort within its network to incorporate natural assets into that work. NCF's leadership, however, recognizes the important role natural assets play in the future of Nebraska hometowns and their economic prosperity. Therefore, as the client of this professional project, NCF has initiated this plan as a first step toward incorporating natural assets into their community development work. This plan will provide NCF with a framework for NABCD, recommendations for implementation, and two case studies of communities that have successfully integrated this approach into their place. NCF intends to use this plan to assist in its future program and partnership development, as well as to guide future goal setting for the organization which prioritizes natural assets. Ultimately, this plan will assist NCF and its entire network of 270 Nebraska communities in seeing their natural environment as a highly valuable community asset to be invested in.

Chapter One: Project Overview

Project Objective

For decades, rural communities have withstood the boom and bust of industry and economy, whether it be agricultural, industrial, manufacturing, etc. These industries and more have demanded the extraction of rural communities' assets, resources, and talents to be used and shipped elsewhere for the prosperity of other places. This has left many rural communities desolate and dependent upon outside forces for support. This extractive cycle not only drains rural communities of people and economic wealth but also impacts a place's overall quality of life and natural landscape.

Ultimately, the extractive cycle robs rural communities of their rural identity and exploits the very source of what makes them rural – natural resources. This plan proposes an end to conventional community development practice in rural communities and introduces a new approach that uplifts what makes communities rural rather than using them or turning them into something they are not.

Natural Asset Based Community Development (NABCD) is a unique rural community development tool that reverses the extractive cycle by intentionally investing in environmental and natural assets that are already present in a community. ***Natural assets*** are the resources naturally found in a place's physical environment. Such assets include water, soil, plants, and animals. These assets play a vital role in the economy and industry of a place and the quality-of-life potential of a place.

Rural communities are overflowing with natural asset potential and are strongly connected to their physical landscape, whether that be economically, culturally, or historically. Therefore, this plan will provide guidance on how rural communities can adopt the NABCD framework and successfully practice its principles in their place.

Natural assets are the resources naturally found in a place's physical environment. Such assets include water, soil, plants, and animals. These assets play a vital role in the economy and industry of places. They offer a certain economic value that can be bought and sold, ultimately providing revenue for the communities where they are most prevalent.

There is also value to come from investing in these natural assets rather than exploiting them for their economic value. For example, local food systems, renewable energy generation, landscape and streetscape design, hazard mitigation and climate resiliency, outdoor recreation, tourism, and so on, are all examples of investments to natural assets that support regeneration over exploitation. All of these opportunities and more are just a peek into the potential which is to come from viewing natural assets as an investment opportunity for communities. This approach considers the environmental, social, and cultural value of natural assets and maximizes their use and impact in communities. Similar to workforce development, affordable housing, business and industry recruitment, and other common community development approaches, natural asset offer their own value to the equation for building more resilient and wealthy communities. This approach is referred to as ***Natural Asset Based Community Development (NABCD)***.

This plan has partnered with the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF), which works to help rural Nebraska communities achieve their dreams through philanthropy, grant assistance, and capacity-building programs, to establish the NABCD framework. In its work as a non-profit community development organization, NCF assists more than 200 Nebraska community foundations from all across the state. They provide education and training opportunities, resources, policy assistance, gift planning guides, and a virtual library full of "real-life examples of the impressive work affiliated funds are doing across the

state,” (NebraskaHometowns.org, 2021). Through this support, community funds are empowered to raise local dollars for unrestricted community projects, including early childhood centers, activity centers, health and wellness facilities, as well as developing grant opportunities to support local community organizations. This place-based approach to community development is the foundation of NCF and what has made them so successful over the last 25 years. This has also made them a fitting partner to support this plan’s work and promote it throughout their network of Nebraska communities.

Although NCF is focused on rural community development, currently, there is not a concentrated effort within its network to incorporate natural assets into that work. NCF’s leadership, however, recognizes the important role natural assets play in the future of Nebraska hometowns and their economic prosperity. Therefore, as the client of this professional project, NCF has initiated this plan as a first step toward incorporating natural assets into their community development work. This plan will provide NCF with a framework for NABCD, recommendations for implementation, and two case studies of communities that have successfully integrated this approach into their place. NCF intends to use this plan to assist in its future program and partnership development, as well as to guide future goal setting for the organization which prioritizes natural assets. Ultimately, this plan will assist NCF and its entire network of 270 Nebraska communities in seeing their natural environment as a highly valuable community asset.

Planning Process

The client of this professional project is the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF). NCF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in the state of Nebraska focused on making meaningful community impact in Nebraska hometowns through the power of philanthropy. “Through philanthropy, our team helps communities develop strong local economies, high quality of life, and abundant leadership and volunteer opportunities. We empower local leaders to identify community assets, invest in their own resources, and bring about their own positive change,” (NebraskaHometown.org, 2021). NCF makes this work possible through its network of 102 community-based affiliated funds and extensive volunteers. Being a community based affiliated fund with NCF “allows funds across the state to operate under NCF’s 501(c)3 organizational umbrella. The affiliated fund enjoys the benefits of the tax-free status without having to apply to the IRS, plus lots of other perks including training, leadership development, and marketing services,” (NebraskaHometowns.org, 2021).

In the spring of 2021, the client and the author of this report met to discuss NCF’s interest in incorporating more sustainability projects into their portfolio of community development work. This meeting included the CEO of NCF, Jeff Yost, and the COO, KC Belitz, as well as the plan’s author, Kristen Ohnoutka. This group will be referred to as the project team. At this initial meeting, the client expressed their interest in sustainable community development, and their desire to incorporate more opportunities to practice this work in their network. This plan was initiated to fulfill that vision for the client and to give a name to this type of work that the client can use in its network. This is where the term natural asset based community development came from. Ultimately, this plan will provide guidance for NCF and its community-affiliated funds on how to successfully practice NABCD in their philanthropic community work across the state. Based on the client’s vision, the project team worked together to create the project scope and planning process outline. The client also requested that this plan be an educational material they can use in their network to help community funds practice NABCD in their place.

After the initial project team meeting, the next few months were spent on developing research and an outline for the plan. This research included primary interviews with board members of NCF, community fund members, and stakeholders who strongly support investing more in natural assets within the NCF network. Those interviewed were chosen by the project team because of their known relationship to sustainable community development or their general support of the concept. The client approved the final list of contacts to interview. The interviews were intended to gauge stakeholder support for this project in the network and to report that back to the client, as well as to record stories from interviewees about how

they are currently investing in their community's natural assets. These interviews were conducted in person during the summer of 2021 by the author of this report. All interviews were recorded, either by audio or written note by the author. During this time, the author also researched the subjects of rural community development and natural asset planning, as well as found examples of other community foundations across the country that are actively investing in natural assets as a community development tool.

Finally, the project team met again toward the end of the summer to discuss research and interview findings as well as provide a finalized project proposal. The client agreed to the proposed findings and project proposal. This prompted the writing stage of the project during the fall of 2021. On September 24th, 2021, the author submitted the plan's proposal to the professional project committee chair, Dr. Yunwoo Nam, and committee members. The proposal defense for this plan was held on October 6th, 2021. The final version of the plan was submitted to the committee on November 8th, 2021. The oral defense of this plan is scheduled for November 12th, 2021.

Project Scope

As stated by the client, it is NCF's vision that natural assets play an important role in its future community development work. This plan will create a guide for NCF and its network of community funds to consider as a first step toward integrating natural assets and NABCD into that work.

To provide a clear path toward achieving this vision, an analytical framework of NABCD has been established. The framework contains five successful components that were identified as integral to the success of the two presented case studies - Norfolk, Nebraska's North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment Project, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota's Falls Park Development Project. A major NABCD project in each of these cases has been assessed to determine the successful components as well as common themes between both cases. The projects in each of the cases are not the same. However, they both align with the NABCD principles presented in this plan. The successful components identified from the case study analyses are:

NABCD Framework

- Planning for Natural Assets
- Engaging Necessary Partners
- Natural Assets Inventory
- Natural Asset Protection/Preservation
- Place-Based Approach

These components were identified as consistent themes between both cases that ultimately assisted in the success of the NABCD projects in each of the communities. This framework of successful components will guide the recommendations for NCF presented later in this plan, as well as prepare a case for potential outcomes of NABCD. The following are presented as recommendations for NCF to consider:

- 1. Planning for Natural Assets**
- 2. Engaging Necessary Partners**
- 3. Natural Asset Inventory**
- 4. Local Food and Healthy Food Systems**

Based on the research conducted for this project, case study analyses, and the proposed recommendations, this plan will provide a vision for adopting NABCD into the NCF network. This vision will assist in future investments, partnerships, and funding ventures NCF chooses to explore in its work as a statewide community foundation. It will also be a deliverable NCF can use in its long-term strategic planning, or as

a resource to offer funds as another perk for being affiliated with the organization. The plan will live on the client's website under its "Resource Library" page that community funds use for education and training purposes.

Finally, this report will predict outcomes from the application of NABCD and its principles in rural communities. It will also introduce what implications such a practice will have on the future of community planning as a profession.

Key Term Definitions

This report frequently uses language that is unique to the client and their network of Nebraska communities. Because of this, the following key term definitions have been provided for readers outside of the NCF network to be able to still benefit from the content of this report.

Asset-Based Community Development: Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is the guiding framework for how NCF operates and works with its affiliated community funds. ABCD is a community development practice rooted in abundance. Instead of the common deficit-based approach often embraced by nonprofits, ABCD focuses on the strengths communities already possess. NCF's premise is that every community has more potential resources than any one person knows. Another way to think of asset-based community development is "Using what's strong to fix what's wrong." (NebraskaHometowns.org, 2021)

A strategy for sustainable community-driven development. Beyond the mobilization of a particular community, ABCD is concerned with how to link micro-assets to the macro-environment. The appeal of ABCD lies in its premise that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognized assets, and thereby responding to and creating local economic opportunity. (DePaul – ABCD Institute, 2021)

Community-based affiliated fund: The formal relationship between Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF) a 501(c)(3) organization and more than 244 funds (and volunteer groups) across Nebraska. Affiliation allows funds across the state to operate under NCF's 501(c)(3) organizational umbrella. The affiliated fund enjoys the benefits of the tax-free status without having to apply to the IRS, plus lots of other perks including training, leadership development, and marketing services. (NebraskaHometowns.org, 2021)

Natural Asset-Based Community Development: The community development practice that focuses its investments on the natural assets present in a community's local environment and natural resources as a means of achieving sustainable community and economic growth.

Natural asset: Any of the natural resources available in a community, place, region, or ecosystem, and the potential to come from those resources. These include minerals, water, wildlife, air, and plants.

The definition of natural assets used in this plan is based on a Wealth Works term "natural capital". This term is defined as "the existing stock of natural resources—for example, water, land, air, plants, and animals—in a region's places," (WealthWorks.org, 2021). Wealth Works is a community and economy-building organization that is made up of a group of partners who have developed and supported the creation of the Wealth Works framework which assists communities in building their wealth. The eight capitals identified in this framework are intellectual, financial, natural, cultural, built, political, individual, and social. All of these assets, Wealth Works believes, assist in the development of community wealth and prosperity. Wealth Works is an Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group project. The term "natural asset" will be used in this plan rather than natural capital, however, because it fits into the existing language and messaging of the client's brand.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

As community foundation funds with NCF continue to build their wealth and search for new community projects to invest in, NCF leadership believes it is important to consider natural assets in that work. Currently, NCF and its community foundations do not have a concentrated effort focused on investing in natural assets. As mentioned previously, natural assets are a unique rural community development tool that, when invested in, can prompt new business and economic opportunities, self-sustainability, and population growth. To better invest in their network, this plan will provide a complete strategy for implementing natural assets into NCF's network for community foundation funds' grant-making and funding decisions. Understanding the value of natural assets as a community development tool will help funds to decide how to properly invest in these assets and search for projects that fit the NABCD framework.

The data used in this plan will support the establishment of the NABCD framework, the proposed recommendations, as well as the anticipated outcomes presented. Ultimately this data will help make the case for why NCF community foundation funds should invest in natural assets and NABCD.

Methodology

The research methodology of this plan is based on quantitative data collected from various institutions, including the 2020 US Census Data, the 2019 American Community Survey, the 2019 Census Reporter, and 2016-2021 City of Norfolk sales tax records. These data will be used primarily in the case study analysis portion of this plan, as well as in the chapters covering recommendations and potential outcomes for the client.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data collected and used in this plan is primarily from the 2019 US Census Bureau and Census Reporter. The information provided by these sources will be used to assess topics of population growth, employment and industry statistics, and community demographic data. This data will be used in the "Case Study Analysis" chapter as well as the "Anticipated Outcomes" chapter. 2019 American Community Survey Data will also be used to provide a community profile of both Norfolk, NE, and Sioux Falls, SD.

Data collected from the 2019 American Community Survey and 2019 Census Reporter will also be used in both case study analyses to examine issues of employment, top industries, community economic conditions such as median income, and growth in particular industry sectors over the years. These indicators will assist in the examination of how natural assets contribute to economic and business growth in communities, particularly through the two case study examples of Norfolk, Nebraska, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Sales tax receipt reports were also collected for the City of Norfolk from 2016 to 2021. These years were selected as a five-year period leading up to the most present-day status of the Riverfront project analyzed in the Norfolk, NE case study. 2017 was the first year that progress was recorded on the current project. 2016 data was chosen to be included to assess conditions from the year before project progress. This information will be used to assess how this NABCD project has impacted local sales tax revenue over the years.

Case Study Analysis

The two case studies analyzed in this plan present two different examples of NABCD. The first case will tell the story of how a northeast Nebraska community is finally returning thanks to the river that gave them their name. Norfolk, Nebraska, in recent years, has taken significant steps toward reinvesting into their North Fork Riverfront, including a redesign that allows for white-water rafting, a reinvigorated community space in the park that abuts the river, and new commercial and residential opportunities along its banks. The results of this recent reinvestment have helped spur serious economic growth throughout the entire community. Data from the 2019 US Census Bureau, the 2019 American Community Survey, and local sales tax receipts from the years 2016 – 2021 will be analyzed in this case study to support these results.

The next case study is a well-known, Midwest community practicing NABCD – Sioux Falls, South Dakota. This community had not always properly invested in the unique natural resources its place had to offer. However, once community leaders and the city bought into the idea of fixing up Falls Park, the city saw almost an immediate return on investment in population growth, new business and residential growth, and new tourism income that far surpassed expectations. These increases will be proven through presented 2019 US Census Bureau data, as well as 2019 American Community Survey data. These data will focus on topics of population growth, community demographics, new businesses, industry and economic growth, and employment.

Supporting academic and professional research has also been used to bolster the success of NABCD projects in both of these communities. Various research supports the successful components identified in the NABCD framework, as well as anticipated outcomes that these communities and others experience as a result of NABCD. Resources from this research can be found in the “Resources” chapter of this plan.

NABCD Framework

This plan has established a framework of successful components for communities to use when implementing the practice of NABCD in their community development strategies. This framework is presented as guidance for successfully completing a NABCD project that ultimately upholds the integrity of natural assets while also promoting community and economic growth.

These components have been proven to be necessary steps communities must address during the planning process of a NABCD project. Although not all are required for success, projects that consider each of these components often experience more of the potential outcomes associated with NABCD (see page 53 for a complete list of potential outcomes).

The components that make up the NABCD framework have been established through the examination of successful cases of NABCD. These cases are the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project – Norfolk, NE, and the Falls Park Development project – Sioux Falls, SD. Both of these cases will be examined in further detail during the “Case Study” chapter of this plan. The five successful components of the NABCD framework are all present in both of the case studies, however, their presence varies in degree and application. Existing academic and professional literature will also be used to support the establishment of this framework.

To build this framework, each of the five components was expanded to include a definition, metric of success, and examples of its application.

It should be acknowledged that these are not the only successful components of NABCD. Further examination and practice of NABCD would surely result in more successful components. However, limiting the framework to the two presented case studies, these five successful components will be the only ones examined in this plan. Future development of this plan should consider other case studies to identify more successful components of NABCD.

SUCCESSFUL COMPONENTS	DEFINITION	METRICS OF SUCCESS
Planning for Natural Assets	A community's comprehensive plan and other strategic plans are the roadmaps that support its vision and goals. As a potential community development tool, natural assets are priority communities should incorporate in their strategic planning efforts. By doing so, communities guarantee future action on these items that align with growth potential, as well as hold themselves accountable to invest in its natural assets.	<p>Presence of strategic goal setting, planning, or an established vision for natural assets in an approved community plan. The following are examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Plan • Master Plan • Transportation Plan • Strategic Plan • Etc.
Engaging Necessary Partners	NABCD requires a highly invested group of partners, organizations, and associations to successfully complete a project. These partners could come from areas of public health, recreation, conservation, energy use and generation, transportation, tourism, economic development, and so on. In this way, NABCD also strengthens community relationships by engaging a multitude of partners and resources, ultimately strengthening local economies and community support networks.	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional partners • Local partners • Advocates • Public/Community Leaders • Experts • Non-profits • Government bodies and departments • Etc.
Natural Assets Inventory	Building from the first successful component – planning for natural assets – a natural asset inventory assists in the long-term strategic planning of natural assets in community development and provides a tangible tool for communities to use when practicing NABCD in their place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify natural assets • Record the existing conditions • Establish threats, weaknesses, strengths, and opportunities of each natural asset • Create a tangible inventory to document these data.
Natural Asset Protection/Preservation	NABCD projects can only be NABCD if they put preservation above development. To successfully implement a NABCD project, the environmental integrity of a natural asset or assets must be maintained. This can create a conflict between development and preservation during a project. However, striking a balance is key to optimizing the benefits of both of these sides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Infrastructure • Carbon off-set • Public Education • Vegetative Buffer Goals • Reuse & Rehabilitate Materials
Place-Based Approach	The premise of the place-based approach, especially when dealing with rural development, is that creating local development strategies that capitalize on local uniqueness will enable territories to develop products and services matched to local assets, which can create a niche market in the increasingly globalized markets of modern times.	<p>The most successful local change happens from the bottom up. To ensure a place-based approach, community members must be the ones to drive change and prosperity in their place.</p> <p>This can be achieved through intentional public engagement strategies and campaigns.</p>

Table 1: Natural Asset Based Community Development Framework.

Planning for Natural Assets:

A community's comprehensive plan is the vehicle that drives its vision and goals. City leaders and community members identify short-term and long-term goals in this plan that support the community's overall vision for its future. Goals included in a comprehensive plan can help a city secure potential fundings needs, resources, and partnerships that are required for achieving this vision. Without a strategic comprehensive plan and list of goals, cities are left with no guidance for future community development work. No comprehensive plan essentially means no vision. Therefore, identifying specific goals and priorities and including them in this plan is vital for future community growth.

As a potential community development tool, natural assets are a priority communities should consider in their comprehensive planning efforts. This successful component of NABCD requires cities to plan for natural assets in their community by identifying current conditions, creating a vision for how they plan to invest in those assets, incorporating natural assets into existing infrastructure and other community projects, and recommending how natural assets can be incorporated into community visions and goals.

Metrics of Success

Successfully completing this component of the NABCD framework requires communities to include natural assets in future plans. The presence of natural assets in an established or approved community plan vision for natural assets in an approved community plan. The following are examples:

- Future land use plans
- Design standards
- Parks and recreation master planning
- Transportation planning
- Energy assessments
- Capital Improvement Plans
- Hazard Mitigation Plans
- Comprehensive Plans
- Downtown Revitalization Plans
- Etc.

Engaging Necessary Partners:

Natural asset based community development requires a highly invested group of partners, organizations, and associations to successfully complete a project. These partners could come from areas of public health, recreation, conservation, energy use and generation, transportation, tourism, economic development, and so on. Establishing necessary partnerships with those who are invested in natural assets, but also financially capable of allocating funds to a project can prove challenging, especially for smaller rural communities.

Building partnerships is seemingly an obvious step in successful community development. However, it must be emphasized here because of the circumstances surrounding NABCD. Natural assets are far-reaching and their impacts beyond community boundaries. Therefore, this initiates the need to include not only community partners, but also regional partners. Natural assets are also somewhat governed by state and federal agencies. Making it necessary to include the appropriate department associated with a particular natural asset at each of these levels when it is required. As stated previously, natural assets impact a wide range of community issues. Therefore, communities must identify all necessary partners who are invested in those issues, but who also can contribute to the project's success. This includes offering funding sources but also advocating for the project and its successful completion.

Partnerships, on top of providing needed funding and support for projects, can also act as a channel for public engagement and feedback. When necessary partners are engaged, they can reach out to their support base and educate them on the project. This creates more avenues for public feedback but also helps to promote the project to a wider audience. Seeking partner or stakeholder feedback on a project can also prevent miscommunication from happening regarding addressing particular issues related to a project. For example, a proposed trails project would benefit greatly from the input of a local bicycle club and its members. Such partnerships are essential to meeting the needs of the public as well as improving the project's final results.

Successful and meaningful public engagement is also essential to the practice of NABCD. Community members understand and know what makes their place special better than anyone. Therefore, successfully engaging the public throughout a NABCD project will create the most meaningful results, as well as preserve a place's identity and uniquely rural identity. Outside influence or expertise can be helpful with community development projects. They can offer experience and knowledge of what has worked in other places and how to apply that same strategy in another place. However, this is not always what rural communities need. To maintain their identity as a rural community, community development strategies must be catered to what fits that identity. Often what worked in one place will not work in another. Planners must respect and recognize a community's rural identity and adjust according to local preference and input. Therefore, a bottom-up approach that engages the public will successfully preserve and protect a place's identity as well as respect the culture of a community and its people.

Although there are no exact metrics communities can use to determine whether they successfully engaged necessary partners, the following examples provide an idea for where these partners can be found within a community.

Examples

- Institutional partners
- Local partners
- Advocates
- Public/Community Leaders
- Experts
- Non-profits
- Government bodies and departments
- Etc.

Natural Asset Inventory:

Building from the first successful component – planning for natural assets – a natural asset inventory assists in the long-term strategic planning of natural assets in community development and provides a tangible tool for communities to use when practicing NABCD in their place.

It is recommended that if the city of Norfolk continues to devote finances and resources toward NABCD projects in its community that it also works to develop a natural asset inventory that identifies all natural assets located in the city, their existing conditions, potential threats or strengths in those assets, their impact to community health and vitality, and potential economic value of those assets. This robust inventory is a highly valuable tool in NABCD work but takes time and effort to implement.

Metrics of Success

- Identify natural assets
 - Ex. Trees, rivers, community gardens, parks, trails, etc.

- Record the existing conditions of these assets
- Establish threats, weaknesses, strengths, and opportunities of each natural asset
- Create a tangible inventory to document these data.
 - Ex. ArcGIS map locating each asset

Protection/Preservation:

Core to the practice of NABCD is the idea of environmental protection and preservation. To successfully implement a NABCD project, the environmental integrity of a natural asset or assets must be maintained. This can create a conflict between development and preservation during a project. However, striking a balance is key to optimizing the benefits of both of these sides.

There are a handful of strategies communities can utilize to prioritize preservation over development. These are not the only strategies communities can use to preserve and prioritize natural assets during community development projects. However, the following is a list of preservation strategies communities can start with:

PRESERVATION STRATEGIES	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Green Infrastructure	The inclusion of green infrastructure into design plans for development projects, including streets, commercial buildings, sidewalks, community facilities, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permeable pavements • Landscape/Streetscape design • Rain garden • Bioswales.
Carbon off-set	This is the act of sequestering or reducing the total carbon emissions made in a community that were used somewhere else, like on a development project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable energy generation • Energy efficiency measures • Carbon sequestration methods • Destruction of significant greenhouse gas emitters in the community
Public Education	Actively engaging the public on natural assets in the community, how they can preserve/protect them, and how they can learn more about them, particularly for those natural assets used in a development project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings • Educational signage • Project website • Social media campaign
Vegetative Buffer Goals	Projects should develop vegetative buffer goals to achieve in the designing and construction of a development project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designating 10% of the project area's square footage to be used for trees or other vegetation. • Plant a certain amount of vegetation to capture 20% of stormwater runoff.

Reuse and Rehabilitate Materials	The reuse and rehabilitation of existing materials can offset project costs while also mitigating future carbon emissions that would've been used to develop new material for a project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize rehabilitation of older buildings over deconstruction. • Reuse a certain percent of materials in any deconstruction projects.
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Table 2: Preservation Strategies for NABCD Successful Component #4 "Protection/Preservation".

Place-Based Approach:

Place-based is an approach to community development that is focused on capacity building at the most micro-level. It encourages communities to identify what they already have, build upon those resources, and make long-term goals based on the development of local assets.

Local agencies and changemakers are the primary drivers of the project's momentum. The investment from local agencies and partners has allowed this project to go from vision to reality. According to Rosanna Salvia and Giovanni Quaranta's journal article, "Place-Based Rural Development and Resilience: A Lesson from a Small Community",

"The premise of the place-based approach, especially when dealing with rural development, is that creating local development strategies that capitalize on local uniqueness will enable territories to develop products and services matched to local assets, which can create a niche market in the increasingly globalized markets of modern times. Local assets can be fixed attributes which policy intervention can in truth do little to change, e.g., physical geography, climate, natural resources, previous infrastructure investment, population structure, or more malleable attributes which can certainly be modified, e.g., leadership capacity, community ties, and quality of local governance," (Salvia & Quaranta, 2017).

The natural assets of a place are unique to that place and provide that niche market potential that Salvia and Quaranta describe. Investments into natural assets are an investment directly into place. Natural assets support the work of those invested in improving the quality of life in the area, the health of residents, and the sustainable future of a community. At its core, NABCD is centered around a place-based approach.

A truly, authentic place-based approach considers localized assets at every level. This also includes people. Engaging the public and utilizing the talents of residents will create a true place-based result for a NABCD project. By giving community members a role in a NABCD project, ownership and accountability for that project is fostered among residents. This leads to the successful maintenance and preservation of natural assets. It also creates an attitude among community members that the protection and preservation of their community's natural assets is a shared priority. This can result in growing the next generation of stewards of the earth, thereby ensuring the future preservation of a community's rural identity.

Chapter Three: Case Study Analysis

North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment Project – Norfolk, Nebraska

Located in northeast Nebraska is the city of Norfolk, a community that can trace its founding back to the river that runs through its historic downtown district. The North Fork River is a tributary of the Elkhorn River, which is located just south of Norfolk city limits. The North Fork is a narrow river that travels from the north of town south until it connects to the Elkhorn River about two miles southeast of Norfolk. Since the community's founding, the North Fork has been a continued part of the city's growth. From giving birth to the city's first industry - a flour mill - to becoming the home of a beloved public park (Johnson Park, see photos) near downtown that was constructed under the WPA. However, with over 100 years of community growth and development, the North Fork River has been greatly impacted by the industry and infrastructure that supports the community today. This has led to overgrowth, litter/pollutants, debris build-up, and unstable banks. In more recent years, the community has taken significant steps toward reinvesting in this community asset and remediating any harm done. This initiative has resulted in what is called the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment Project.



Image 1: Johnson Park Norfolk, NE (1911). Elkhorn Valley Museum.



(Left) Image 2: Johnson Park Norfolk, NE (1911). Elkhorn Valley Museum.



(Right) Image 3: Sugar City Cereal Mills Norfolk, NE (1909). NorthForkRiverfront.com/history-2/.

Community Profile

The following is a brief summation of data that makes up Norfolk's community profile. Although analyzing the entire community is necessary, this case study will focus solely on the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project. Norfolk is a mid-sized community in northeast Nebraska with a population estimate of 24,955, according to 2020 US Census Data. The median age of the community is 35.7 years old, with the largest age groups being 20-29 years old and 50-59 years old (2019 Census Reporter). Top industries in the Norfolk area are Educational services, and health care, and social assistance (23.8%), and Manufacturing (19.7%) (2019 American Community Survey). According to 2019 US Census data, the median household income for Norfolk is \$49,372, which is about 80% of the state median income - \$63,229.

Project History

According to the project's website, in 1962, city leaders began working with the Army Corps of Engineers to implement a flood control project. The city has a long history of experiencing severe flooding events, particularly in the downtown area. This project, when complete, would be able to withstand twice the amount of floodwater that a 100-year flood event could have brought at that time. The final design included 4.5 miles of canal that started north of Norfolk and ended southeast near Omaha Avenue. This flood control reconfigured the North Fork River and established a flood gate along its channel. According to a 1991 report from the US Army Corps of Engineers, "The project was completed in 1968 for \$3,400,500 Federal and \$960,000 non-Federal. Through the Fiscal Year 1990, the project has prevented an estimated \$6,985,000 in flood damages," (Water Resources Development in Nebraska 1991, US Army Corps of Engineers – Missouri River Division). This estimated cost of damages prevented would prove to be significantly larger after the devastating 2010 and 2019 floods the community has experienced since this was published. Ultimately, this project greatly impacted Johnson Park which lies adjacent to the North Fork just one block north of downtown. The Park lost its historical charm which included botanical gardens, walking trails, playground equipment, a fishing pond, and picnic areas; and became less and less of a destination for residents due to the reconstruction of the river and newly established berm along its bank.

It was about a decade later that the City and local partners decided to put together a Master Plan for the park and river. In 1974, the first redesign of the North Fork Riverfront was proposed by the City of Norfolk with the support of the landscape architecture consultants hired for the project. This concept caught the attention of other community partners, including the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resource District. It wasn't until the 1990s, however, that these interested partners came together to envision a more comprehensive plan for the



Image 4: Flood Control Channel project (1966). NorthForkRiverfront.com/history-2/.

entire downtown North Fork River segment. This segment's boundaries stretched six miles and included residential neighborhoods, downtown business districts, and major commercial corridors.

In 2008, the initiative gained public attention when former mayor, Jim Miller, and local artist, Lonnn Atwood, came together to create a vision that they shared through numerous public meetings. These meetings led to what is still existing today as the Riverfront Development Group, now the Riverfront Committee with the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce. At this time, members of the committee were able to fundraise nearly \$90,000 locally for the project, and with those funds hired planning firm HDR to create a Riverfront Master Plan as the project's first phase.



*Image 5: North Fork River spillway.
"20191117_new_norfolk_pic_cm001 (copy). (2019).
Machian, Chris. Omaha World Herald.*

Since the committee's founding, its members have been applying for and receiving both local and state grants that have allowed the project to survive over the decades. However, it wasn't until 2018 that the project started to gain real momentum. In 2018, the City of Norfolk began to play a more active role in the project, starting with the City Council approving an "overlay district" that abuts the North Fork River to guide development along the riverfront as well as to create design standards for any new construction within the district. At this time, the LENRD also renewed its involvement in the project by approving more than \$1 million to be designated for the development of the riverfront, with a primary focus on improving water quality and recreation access for residents.

Continuing its involvement, the City Council approved a contract with Riverwise Engineering in 2019, as well as JEO Consulting Group and Big Muddy Workshop, to plan the design for the North Fork Riverfront Development Project. The following improvements were recommended by this planning team:

- The redevelopment of the North Fork River to include eight, whitewater drop-points
- The restoration of Johnson Park to include community festival space and the incorporation of an amphitheater
- The replacement of the 1st Street bridge to incorporate an underpass trail.

Today, these recommendations are being considered by partners and city leaders, but no final decisions have been made about project design concepts. It is planned that this project will be completed by 2024, as of the latest edition of the project timeline on the website.

Project Timeline

Although movement toward completing this project can be dated back as early as the 1960s, the following timeline depicts the most recent activity recorded on the currently proposed riverfront project. This timeline includes adjacent projects to the riverfront district that do not directly impact the project but play a role in overall improvements to the area. This area primarily includes downtown, adjacent neighborhoods, and commercial districts, as well as community facility improvements.

2018: Bridge replacement and trail completion – East Norfolk Avenue
2018: Norfolk Public Library completes \$7 million expansion and updates
2018: LENRD contributes \$1 million to the Riverfront project
2019: Greater Norfolk Economic Development Board purchases commercial lot adjacent to the riverfront - 1st Street & Norfolk Avenue, Old Mill building
2020: Growing Together joins the project as a partner along with the City, Chamber of Commerce, and LENRD
2020: Braasch Avenue & 1st Street reconstruction completed

2020: Johnson Park improvements project out for bid
 2020: Riverpoint Square completed
 2021: 1st Street and Norfolk Avenue Old Mill building bid process
 2021: Johnson Park preliminary design review process
 2022: Riverfront redevelopment and whitewater park construction to begin

Project Budget

According to the most recent information provided on the project website, the following budget has been allocated for the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project. This includes Johnson Park improvements, riverfront restoration, walking and biking trail construction, whitewater park and features, and facility/amenity improvements to the river and park.

- Total Committed: \$8,462,402
- City KENO – \$1,181,701
- Lower Elkhorn NRD – \$1,031,701
- CCCFF Design & Construction Grant – \$1,125,000
- NE Highway Allocation Funds – \$3,324,000
- Foundation 1 – \$500,000
- Foundation 2 – \$500,000
- CDBG Tourism Grant – \$435,000
- Sanitary Improvement District – \$250,000
- Water Enterprise Fund – \$100,000
- CCCFF Planning Grant – \$15,000

Current Project Status

Considering the various pieces that will be going into this entire project, stakeholders and the City have broken it down into phases and separate projects to ease financial burdens and overall progress. Each of the following is considered phases of the overall North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project and the descriptions are provided by the project website indicating each of their current statuses.

<i>North Fork River Restoration & Pedestrian Bridge</i>	<i>Project Status:</i>
Based on the data collected during site visits and subsequent analysis, a study conducted by Riverwise Engineering concluded that the areas by Johnson Park near North First Street and East Norfolk Avenue boast characteristics that have supported some of the more successful whitewater parks in the country. At its core, the North Fork River Restoration project includes the removal of a 6' drop structure and a 6' spillway at the bridge on First Street and the incorporation of eight, 18" drop points between the railroad bridge and the take-out point immediately south of the newly, redeveloped Norfolk Avenue bridge. The drop points will introduce white water characteristics to the river, provide beautification along the bank corridors, and enhance aquatic habitat including fish passages at each drop restoring the ability for fish to easily move upstream. Additionally, an abandoned railroad bridge will be moved downstream and incorporated into the trail system providing a pedestrian walkway just upstream of the First Street Bridge. The project will serve three main user types: in-stream users, on-bank users, and anglers.	Design Stage

<i>Johnson Park Revitalization</i>	<i>Project Status:</i>
The Johnson Park revitalization plan focuses on the rehabilitation of a park that was once considered an integral part of Norfolk’s economic and cultural identity. The plan includes varying degrees of grading to provide safe, ADA access to the river, introduces additional parking, provides for enhanced festival space, and cultivates the expansion of youth amenities. The introduction of an amphitheater with a permanent stage and grass seating for hundreds will establish another unique, outdoor venue for concerts, plays, and ceremonies in Norfolk.	Design Stage
<i>First Street Bridge Replacement with Underpass Trail System & Roundabout Integration</i>	<i>Project Status:</i>
To optimize the improvements made to the North Fork River and Johnson Park, an evaluation of the existing bridge on First Street was done to ensure safety and connectivity, which is paramount to the overall plan. The existing bridge is defined as a “box culvert” that if left, would leave obstacles in the river impairing safety and navigability for future water users. A complete replacement of the existing bridge is needed to remove the concrete obstacles within the river, as well as create a trail underpass thereby removing the dangers pedestrians encounter with the current at a grade traffic crossing. Additionally, to reduce traffic speeds, promote pedestrian safety, and provide further interconnection to the area, the North Fork Development Project includes the introduction of a roundabout at First Street and Braasch Avenue.	Design Stage
<i>Riverpoint Square</i>	<i>Project Status:</i>
The City of Norfolk recently worked alongside partners at the State of Nebraska and Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District to create a permanent community gathering place at 3rd & Norfolk Avenue in downtown Norfolk. Riverpoint Square adds another dimension to a growing and evolving downtown, providing a gathering space that can be used for markets and festivals. The Riverpoint Square project included extensive landscaping, the introduction of shade structures, and increased lighting.	Complete
<i>Braasch Avenue Beautification</i>	<i>Project Status:</i>
The City of Norfolk recently completed the restructuring and beautification of Braasch Avenue from First Street to Fifth Street.	Complete

The improvements to Braasch Avenue enhance the connectivity from downtown Norfolk to the North Fork River and Johnson Park, provide extensive landscaping to provide a cohesive sense of beauty for the area, and ensure that the street will equitably serve the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles.

* *NorthForkRiverfront.com* 2021

Case Analysis

Considering the project background, timeline, budget, and current status, the following will provide an analysis of this NABCD project, how it meets the successful components identified in the NABCD framework and recommendations for how this project could be improved upon. Because NABCD projects can vary widely in their scope and process, this case should be considered as only an example of NABCD and not the only way to successfully replicate the principles of NABCD in a community.

Identified Successful Outcomes

As identified previously, there are five successful components attributed to the NABCD framework. These are:

- **Planning for Natural Assets**
- **Engaging Necessary Partners**
- **Natural Assets Inventory**
- **Natural Asset Protection/Preservation**
- **Place-Based Approach**

These components are necessary steps communities must address during the planning process of a NABCD project. Although not all are required, projects that consider each of these components are often proven to experience more of the potential outcomes associated with NABCD (see page 53). As stated previously, these five components are themes that were pulled from the North Fork Riverfront and Falls Park cases and were identified as successful components of both of these projects. The following examination will show where each of the five successful components is found in the North Fork Riverfront case and examine how they are attributed to the overall success of the project. Therefore, supporting that the NABCD framework is an effective community development tool.

To analyze how this project is a successful application of the NABCD framework, each of the five identified components will be applied to this case, and metrics of measurement will be used to prove how each successful component was achieved. This analysis will prove the validity of the NABCD framework and its components, as well as potential outcomes associated with NABCD projects.

Successful Components	Description	Metrics	Norfolk	
			Achieved	Example
Planning for Natural Assets	A community's comprehensive plan and other strategic plans are the roadmaps that support its vision and goals. As a potential community development tool, natural assets are a priority communities should incorporate in their strategic planning efforts. By doing so,	Presence of strategic goal setting, planning, or an established vision for natural assets in an approved community plan. The following are examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Plan • Master Plan • Transportation Plan • Strategic Plan 	X	City of Norfolk Comprehensive Plan 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vision & Goals Chapter</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outstanding Quality of Life <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote healthy living through the creation of community-wide health and wellness programs and activities 2. Enhance accessibility to

	communities guarantee future action on these items that align with growth potential, as well as hold themselves accountable to invest in their natural assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Etc. 		recreation opportunities - Strategic Physical Growth and Development 1. Create a vibrant riverfront that serves as a spine for new residential, commercial, and recreational activities while providing opportunities to enjoy the river daily • <i>Energy Element Chapter</i> - Goals and Strategies 1. Decrease energy use and increase the percentage of renewable energy used by Norfolk Residents • <i>Future Land Use Chapter</i> - Parks and Recreation - Elkhorn River Corridor - North Fork Elkhorn River District
Engaging Necessary Partners	NABCD requires a highly invested group of partners, organizations, and associations to successfully complete a project. These partners could come from areas of public health, recreation, conservation, energy use and generation, transportation, tourism, economic development, and so on. In this way, NABCD also strengthens community relationships by engaging a multitude of partners and resources, ultimately strengthening local economies and community support networks.		X	Necessary partners have been identified and engaged in this process. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Norfolk • Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District • Norfolk Area Chamber Riverfront Committee • Greater Norfolk Economic Development Council • Northeast Nebraska Growing Together • Etc.
Natural Assets Inventory	Building from the first successful component – planning for natural assets – a natural asset inventory assists in the long-term strategic planning of natural assets in community development and provides a tangible tool for communities to use when practicing NABCD in their place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify natural assets • Record these existing conditions • Establish threats, weaknesses, strengths, and opportunities of each natural asset Create a tangible inventory to document these data.	+	Natural assets in the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project area have been identified, but there is no existing inventory of community-wide natural assets to support the successful completion of this component.

Natural Asset Protection/Preservation	NABCD projects can only be NABCD if they put preservation above development. To successfully implement a NABCD project, the environmental integrity of a natural asset or assets must be maintained. This can create a conflict between development and preservation during a project. However, striking a balance is key to optimizing the benefits of both of these sides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Infrastructure • Carbon off-set • Public Education • Vegetative Buffer Goals • Reuse & Rehabilitate Materials 	+	Preservation of natural assets is a priority of the North Fork Redevelopment project, however, there are no strategic goals to meet that successfully indicate preservation metrics have been met. Metrics for protection/preservation success should be established by communities before completing a NABCD project.
Place-Based Approach	The premise of the place-based approach, especially when dealing with rural development, is that creating local development strategies that capitalize on local uniqueness will enable territories to develop products and services matched to local assets, which can create a niche market in the increasingly globalized markets of modern times.		X	Based on the information provided in this case, Norfolk has found its niche market in the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project. Further development of this asset, as well as a strategy for building further community growth from this asset, will expand its reach into the northeast Nebraska region, as well as the state.

Table 3: North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project NABCD Framework Application.

X: Indicates the Component has been successfully applied in the case

+: Indicates the Component has been started but does not meet the metric of success, meaning more should be done for this component.

Planning for Natural Assets

A community's comprehensive plan is the roadmap that supports its vision and goals. City leaders and community members identify short-term and long-term goals in this plan that support the community's overall vision for its future. Goals included in a comprehensive plan can help a city secure potential fundings needs, resources, and partnerships that are required for achieving this vision. Without a strategic comprehensive plan and list of goals, cities are left with no guidance for future community development work. No comprehensive plan essentially means no vision. Therefore, identifying specific goals and priorities and including them in this plan is vital for future community growth.

As a potential community development tool, natural assets are a priority communities should consider in their comprehensive planning efforts. This successful component of NABCD requires cities to plan for natural assets in their community, identify the current conditions of those natural assets, and create a vision for how they plan to invest in those assets. In the case of the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment

project, the city has made a concerted effort to incorporate more natural assets into its long-term planning methods.

In 2017, the City of Norfolk identified “outstanding quality of life” as a primary goal of its community vision. In this section of its comprehensive plan, “outstanding quality of life” is defined as “focused upon enhancing daily living through diverse offerings, activities, and events,” (City of Norfolk, NE Comprehensive Plan 2017). Within this goal, the following were presented as actions for achieving that goal:

1. Promote healthy living through the creation of community-wide health and wellness programs and activities
2. Enhance accessibility to recreation opportunities; and
3. Diversify the number and type of cultural activities and entertainment events.

Relating to natural asset based community development, “Promote healthy living...” and “Enhance accessibility to recreation opportunities” are two actions that are focused on investing in natural assets through recreation and community health/wellbeing.

For example, under “Promote healthy living through the creation of community-wide health and wellness programs and activities”, the following was identified as a step to achieve this action, “Create a Healthy Lifestyle Alliance to leverage resources and conduct activities and programs through partnerships among education, recreation, and medical providers, as well as corporate sponsors,” (City of Norfolk, NE Comprehensive Plan 2017). Note the reference to further developing healthy activities and events focused on recreation and getting residents outside to use existing natural assets as a source of physical activity, health, and wellness.

There were also three more steps identified under the second action - “Enhance accessibility to recreation opportunities”. They are:

- “Promote the development of neighborhood-scale institutions (i.e. schools, places of worship), facilities (i.e. parks, community gardens), and amenities whenever possible to support informal and formal recreation activity.
- Continue implementation efforts related to the Riverfront Trail, and develop a viable network to connect parks, community facilities, and destinations with neighborhoods via designated pedestrian and bicycle trails.
- Become known as a welcoming and accommodating community in the region offering unique daily recreational experiences for citizens and annual recreational events for visitors with special needs,” (City of Norfolk, NE Comprehensive Plan 2017).

Both of these actions (#1 & #2) featured under the “Outstanding Quality of Life” primary goal relate to future investments to local natural assets, especially around those related to physical recreation and community health. Based on this identification it is clear that living in a healthy and clean community is a top priority for the City of Norfolk and viewed as essential toward providing an outstanding quality of life experience for its residents.

Another example of planning for natural assets in Norfolk’s Comprehensive Plan is another primary goal of its overall vision – Strategic Physical Growth and Development. This goal is defined as, “focused upon creating vibrant and sustainable places,” (City of Norfolk, NE Comprehensive Plan 2017). There are three actions listed under this goal, however, only one relates to natural assets. That action is “Create a vibrant riverfront that serves as a spine for new residential, commercial, and recreational activities while providing opportunities to enjoy the river daily,” (City of Norfolk, NE Comprehensive Plan 2017). This direct mention of the riverfront indicates a long-term vision the City has established for using the riverfront as a catalyst for other future community development.

Other examples of planning for natural assets in the City of Norfolk's Comprehensive Plan include a chapter dedicated to assessing the community's current energy use and goals related to transitioning to more renewable energy sources, as well as plans for how to improve natural assets in its Future Land Use chapter, including public parks, the Elkhorn River corridor, and the North Fork Riverfront District. CThe City views the riverfront as a sort of domino in its long-term community development planning and has made it a key piece of the overall community vision in its comprehensive plan.

Engaging Necessary Partners

Natural asset based community development requires a highly invested group of partners, organizations, and associations to successfully complete a project. These partners could come from areas of public health, recreation, conservation, energy use and generation, transportation, tourism, economic development, and so on. Since the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project was first initiated in the 1960s, finding this core group of investors has been one of the biggest challenges for the project's leaders. Establishing necessary partnerships with those who are invested in natural assets, but also financially capable of allocating funds to a project can prove challenging, especially for smaller rural communities. Norfolk witnessed this first-hand from the period of the 1960s leading up to 2010.

Project background shows that momentum for the project did not start until 2017 when the City of Norfolk and the LENRD came together with the Chamber of Commerce's Riverfront Committee and made a financial and fundraising plan for the project. Although there was much work done in the past to get the project to this point that must be recognized. This includes past local fundraising efforts by the Committee and the creation of several plans outlining design concepts for Johnson Park, the North Fork River, trail maps, etc.

Tangible results from this decades-long effort came about in 2018 when LENRD allocated \$1 million toward the project. This allocation covered one-third of the estimated project costs. Without this partnership with LENRD, the project most likely would not have gained momentum as it did at that time and would not be at its current stage of completion.

As a Natural Resource District, it is the responsibility of the LENRD to protect, preserve, and conserve the natural resources of its designated district. For LENRD, its constituency consists of 15 counties in northeast Nebraska. The map below identifies these counties that are each represented by a board member on the LENRD Board of Directors. Its mission states, "Striving to improve the quality of life for all citizens of the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District by promoting and demonstrating sound methods of stewardship which conserve, develop and manage all natural resources," (LENRD.org, 2021). The LENRD Board recognized its role in the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project based on this mission and its responsibilities as a public entity and approved the \$1 million allocations in 2018.

Building partnerships is seemingly an obvious step in successful community development. However, it must be emphasized here because of the circumstances surrounding NABCD. Natural assets are far-reaching and their impacts beyond community boundaries. Therefore, this initiates the need to include not only community partners, but also regional partners. Natural assets are also somewhat governed by state and federal agencies. Making it necessary to include the appropriate department associated with a particular natural asset at each of these levels when it is required. As stated previously, natural assets impact public health, transportation, land use, recreation, tourism, economic development, and so many more facets of community development. Therefore, communities must identify all necessary partners but also all relevant partners that can make accomplishing a NABCD project possible. Not only as funding sources but also as advocates for the project and its successful completion.

Partnerships, on top of providing needed funding and support for projects, can also act as a source for public engagement and feedback on NABCD projects. When necessary partners are engaged, they can

reach out to their support base and educate them on the proposed project. This creates more avenues for public feedback but also helps to promote the project to a wider audience. Seeking partner or stakeholder feedback on a project can also prevent any missteps from happening regarding not addressing particular issues. For example, if the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resource District was not brought in on the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project, the project team may not have recognized the need to educate the public on water quality and runoff issues that impact the North Fork.

Such partnerships are essential to meeting the needs of the public as well as improving the final project results.

Natural Asset Inventory

In the case of the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project, the City has begun to take stock of all the natural assets available in this project. Plans have been made to further develop a comprehensive trail system along the river, improve Johnson Park, add whitewater features for river users to enjoy, education around water quality. All of these assets have been identified in the Comprehensive Plan and its sections relating to the Riverfront project. However, there is currently not an extensive city-wide inventory of all-natural assets in the community.

Building from the first successful component – planning for natural assets – a natural asset inventory assists in the long-term strategic planning of natural assets in community development and provides a tangible tool for communities to use when practicing NABCD in their place.

It is recommended that if the city of Norfolk continues to devote finances and resources toward NABCD projects in its community that it also works to develop a natural asset inventory that identifies all natural assets located in the city, their existing conditions, potential threats or strengths in those assets, their impact to community health and vitality, and potential economic value of those assets. This robust inventory is a highly valuable tool in NABCD work but takes time and effort to implement.

More about how a community can build this inventory will be featured in the Recommendations section of this chapter (page 44).

Natural Asset Protection/Preservation

Core to the practice of NABCD is the idea of environmental protection and preservation. To successfully implement a NABCD project, the environmental integrity of a natural asset or assets must be maintained. This can create a conflict between development and preservation during a project. However, striking a balance is key to optimizing the benefits of both of these sides.

The North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project is a good example of how a community has used a natural asset that dates back further than its founding as the nucleus of its community identity and the primary driver for subsequent community development projects.

In its plans to redevelop the riverfront, Norfolk has prioritized bringing the river back to its original state – a tree-lined, navigable channel that supports recreation, native fish populations, and water quality in the area. For the last few decades, the North Fork has primarily been used as a manipulated flood channel. The riverfront project, however, proposes the river be returned to its original state that once gave life to the city.

However, with any project comes impact from the built environment. Adjacent to the south of the North Fork River in downtown Norfolk is a commercial building that was once the site of the town's flour mill – the original community enterprise. Today, this building is home to a laundry mat, office space, and the local VFW post. In 2019, the Northeast Nebraska Greater Economic Development Council recognized the

need to address this building as part of the Riverfront project. The group purchased the property at this time and currently is making plans to bid the site out for development as a potential retail/entertainment space with riverfront views.

Currently, the existing building is located just a few hundred feet from the river's banks. It also includes a large, public parking lot. Also adjacent to the river is an arterial road that is currently four lanes wide. This road, 1st Street, travels north and south over the river via the 1st Street bridge. Currently, there are plans to reconstruct this bridge to support the development of a whitewater park in the area. This is also a major thoroughfare in town. It is located just a block north of downtown, intersects a state highway (Hwy 275), and leads to two major educational institutions, Norfolk Middle School and Northeast Community College, as well as other community amenities such as the YMCA.



Image 6: The Old Mill commercial building located at 1st and Norfolk Avenue. 20191117_new_norfolk_pic_cm010 (copy). (2019). Machian, Chris. Omaha World Herald.

It is difficult to balance how such a major roadway can be maintained without compromising transportation efficiency, but also preserve the integrity of the North Fork River, Johnson Park, and other natural assets in this area. Currently, there is no strategic plan for this project on how the city plans to preserve the natural assets and environment in this area during the development of the riverfront project, as well as the redesign of the Old Mill commercial building. It is recommended the city make these strategic plans to identify quantitative methods that successfully preserve local natural assets during this process.

As mentioned previously there are a handful of strategies communities can utilize to prioritize preservation over development. These are not the only strategies communities can implement to preserve natural assets during community development projects. However, the following are an identified list provided in this plan:

- **Green Infrastructure** – The inclusion of green infrastructure into design plans for development projects, including streets, commercial buildings, sidewalks, community facilities, etc.
- **Carbon offset** – This is the act of sequestering or reducing the total carbon emissions made in a community that were used somewhere else, like on a development project.
- **Public Education** – Actively engaging the public on natural assets in the community, how they can preserve/protect them, and how they can learn more about them, particularly for those natural assets used in a development project. This engagement can happen during the planning stages, be featured at the final site of a project, or be accessed online via a website or social media.
- **Vegetative Buffer Goals** – Projects should develop vegetative buffer goals to achieve in the designing and construction of a development project. For example, 10% of the property's square footage will be designated for trees and other vegetation.
- **Reuse and Rehabilitate Materials** – The reuse and rehabilitation of existing materials can offset project costs while also mitigating future carbon emissions that would've been used to develop new material for a project.

Specific steps under each of these strategies can be found on page 15.

Place-Based Approach

When applying the Place-Based Approach component to the North Fork Redevelopment project, it is clear this project is rooted in place. The primary source of this project – the North Fork River – is the very center of where Norfolk originated. Returning community focus to this river channel turns a reflective look inward and allows the community to assess what other assets they have in their place that can be further developed.

Along with the source of this project being rooted in place, the partnership is as well. Local agencies and changemakers are the primary drivers of the project's momentum. The investment from local agencies and partners has allowed this project to go from vision to reality. According to Rosanna Salvia and Giovanni Quaranta's journal article, "Place-Based Rural Development and Resilience: A Lesson from a Small Community",

"The premise of the place-based approach, especially when dealing with rural development, is that creating local development strategies that capitalize on local uniqueness will enable territories to develop products and services matched to local assets, which can create a niche market in the increasingly globalized markets of modern times. Local assets can be fixed attributes which policy intervention can in truth do little to change, e.g., physical geography, climate, natural resources, previous infrastructure investment, population structure, or more malleable attributes which can certainly be modified, e.g., leadership capacity, community ties, and quality of local governance," (Salvia & Quaranta, 2017).

Based on the information provided in this case, Norfolk has found its niche market in the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project. Further development of this asset, as well as a strategy for building further community growth from this asset, will expand its reach into the northeast Nebraska region, as well as the state.

Conclusion

Based on the background, timeline, budget, current status, and analysis of the NABCD framework, in this case, the conclusion of the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project is determined to be a successful practice of NABCD. Considering the project successfully meets the established metrics of three of the five successful components and indicates a start on the remaining two, it is clear this project aligns with the overall principles of NABCD.

In a later chapter (Anticipated Outcomes) the case for potential outcomes of NABCD will be presented. This will include further analysis of the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project, specifically how the project has led to significant increases in local revenue via sales tax receipts. More potential outcomes are predicted to follow this project. However, the analysis of sales tax receipt data for this project will be the only outcome defended in this plan. Future development of this plan could address other potential outcomes the community has seen as a direct result of this project. Also, considering this project is not yet complete indicates there are future potential outcomes that are not yet identified that should be examined at a later date.

Falls Park Development Project– Sioux Falls, South Dakota

As the largest municipality in the state of South Dakota, Sioux Falls enjoys the amenities of an urban city while remaining in a rural setting. This is the basis for one of the community's most well-known destinations located right in its historic downtown area – Falls Park.

Falls Park is an expansive public park located along the Big Sioux River, which loops through the city of Sioux Falls from north to south and then heads back north again as it travels through the park. The falls are made of Sioux Quartzite a rock native to the Sioux area of South Dakota. It is an extremely hard, pinkish/red stone that is prominently found throughout the downtown area, including in the paved streets, old buildings, and even homes. The stone was a major natural resource that brought enterprise and new business to the area around the founding of the community in 1856. The stone gave way to a natural cascading waterfall structure along the Big Sioux that has served residents of the Sioux Falls area for decades, “The Falls of the Big Sioux River have been a focus of life in the region throughout history. Native American peoples were the first to visit the Falls and bring stories of them to European explorers. They have been the center of recreation and industry since the founding of the city in 1856,” (ExperienceSiouxFalls.com, 2021).

One of the first industries to come to the Falls was the Queen Bee Mill – a seven-story mill. The structure was made entirely of Sioux Quartzite and cost \$500,000 to construct. Then in 1908, a second industry opened its doors along the river’s banks. The Sioux Falls Light and Power Company “building housed three 500-kilowatt hydroelectric generators and used the dam and the millrace from the Queen Bee Mill. In subsequent years the plant added additional coal-fired steam generators. The plant was abandoned in 1974 and donated to the city in 1977,” (ExperienceSiouxFalls.com, 2021).

From the city’s inception to the mid-20th century, residents and visitors frequented the Falls any time of the year. People used the space as a park, picnic area, for ice skating, swimming, and more. There was a small parcel of land in the middle of the Falls that locals called Seney Island. This was a popular picnic spot for residents of the community, and a favorite getaway for young people during the summer months.

The area around the Falls remained primarily native despite industry coming and going through the decades, including a railroad track. However, because the area became more centered around industry, this primitive nature led to unsightly and neglected conditions which significantly impacted how the area was viewed and decreased its use as a natural, public space.



(Top) Image 7: Falls Park scene from 1929. (1929). “Beauty to neglect, the quick fall of the falls: KELOLAND.com Original on Falls Park, Part 2”. Yost, Rae, KELOland News. (February 2021). Photo courtesy: Irene Hall Museum Resource Center.

(Left) Image 8: An aerial view of Falls Park from the 1950s. “Beauty to neglect, the quick fall of the falls: KELOLAND.com Original on Falls Park, Part 2”. Yost, Rae, KELOland News. (February 2021). Photo courtesy: Irene Hall Museum Resource Center.

It was not until the 1970s that momentum began to change around the community using this natural asset. This case study will analyze the steps the community and partners took during a long journey that ultimately brought the Falls back to the center of the community's identity.

Community Profile

The following is a brief summation of data that makes up Sioux Falls' community profile. Although analyzing the entire community is necessary, this case study will focus solely on the Falls Park Development project. Sioux Falls is the largest community in the state of South Dakota, with a population estimate of 192,517, according to 2020 US Census Data. The median age of the community is 35.3 years old, with the largest age groups being 20-29 years old and 30-39 years old (2019 Census Reporter). Top industries in the Sioux Falls area are Educational services, and health care, and social assistance (25.6%), and Retail Trade (11.9%) (2019 American Community Survey). According to 2019 US Census data, the median household income for Sioux Falls is \$61,058, which is nearly \$3,000 more than the state median income.

Project Background

By the 1960s, the Falls were well-known not for their beauty and natural features, but rather for the nefarious activity that was becoming more and more common in the area. At this time, according to US Census Data, the city's population was 65,466. Although the city was continuing to grow, many parts were considered unsafe, especially the park space closest to the Falls. The overgrowth of vegetation provides cover for individuals who began to make the park their official home, referred to as "hobo road" by locals.

But things changed in the late 1960s and early 1970s when Hazel O'Connor came on the scene. After a well-fought battle to preserve a historic home in another Sioux Falls city park. O'Connor was a known local activist who advocated for issues such as historic preservation, social and cultural issues, and environmental justice. She became one of the first advocates for the Falls during this time in the community's history. Today, a plaque stands in her honor at Falls Park, recognizing her tenacity and dedication to preserving this natural asset:

"With a pioneer spirit, Hazel O'Connor has continually led the way toward a better Sioux Falls. One of her special concerns has been the Big Sioux River and the Falls, the city's namesake. As a leader of the City Federation of Women's Clubs, she urged the restoration of Falls Park and continues to be its greatest champion. As a charter member of the river improvement society (RISE). She has worked for the realization of today's Big Sioux River Greenway. Her vision, perseverance, and dedication is an inspiration for her generation and for future generations to preserve the quality of life in Sioux Falls."

This was at a time when the environmental movement was sweeping through communities and climate change became one of the most debated topics on the global stage. This international movement made waves even in South Dakota through the activism of local leaders like O'Connor. However, O'Connor's work was only the beginning stages of this project.

The RISE organization chartered by O'Connor became the primary driver for improvements at Falls Park under her leadership. The organization planned clean-up days and sparked new interest in recreational use of the river. These improvements were significant. However, it was not until city leaders got involved during the



Image 9: "Overlook Cafe". (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department.
<https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park>

1980s that real community development strategies were formed to plan for the long-term vision of Falls Park.

By 1994, plans were made to start the construction of a parking lot, new roadways, sidewalks, lighting, and other necessary infrastructure at the park. According to an article by Keloland in February 2021, the next phases of park improvements were planned in five-year increments by the city's Parks Department. According to the department's website, today the park is 123-acre with "magnificent rock formations, viewing areas, walkways, and picnic areas...some of the earliest buildings and a visitor information center with a five-story observation tower," (SiouxFalls.org, 2021).

Just in the last year, there has still been continued development in the park. The most recent project, the Jacobson Plaza, is a proposed \$4 million public-private project which will include an ice-skating rink, playground, restrooms, and open-air shelters. This project is a combination of private donations and public funds to provide a unique year-round recreational experience for visitors and residents.

More recently, in May of 2021, another major redevelopment project was announced for the Falls Park area. Located between Falls Park and downtown Sioux Falls is an old steel production building. It has remained mostly empty over the years. However, Lloyd Cos., a private developer, has proposed a \$200 million renovation to the historic, brick warehouse that includes plans for a hotel, retail, and office space, as well as residential living. The developer hopes to utilize TIF to help support the project with construction expected to start in early 2022.

Falls Park has become a catalyst for development in Sioux Falls. What once started as a small act of environmental advocacy, has now exploded into what seems to be almost endless potential centered around the community's most prized natural asset.



(Top) Image 10: View from tower. (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department.
<https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park>

(Bottom) Image 11: View from east bank. (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department.
<https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park>

Timeline

DATE	DESCRIPTION
1960 - 1979	<p>Hazel O'Connor begins advocating for improvements to be made at Falls Park</p> <p>River Improvement Society (RISE) chartered as an official organization, begins volunteering and fundraising for Falls Park projects.</p>

1980-1999	<p>The City of Sioux Falls preserves a greenbelt around the Big Sioux River and dedicates it as public park space.</p> <p>O'Connor died on April 18, 1985, at the age of 87.</p> <p>The City takes over and begins planning a long-term vision for the future of Falls Park.</p>
2000 -2019	<p>Infrastructure improvements are slowly made throughout the park, including roadways, sidewalks, parking lots, lighting, and preservation of existing historic buildings (Power & Light building and old mill building).</p> <p>Development interest grows in the nearby downtown area, sparking new business, retail, entertainment, and residential growth.</p>
2020	Jacobson Plaza is proposed, which includes an ice-skating rink, playground, and open-air shelter.
2021	Sioux Steel downtown redevelopment project planned for 2023.

Table 4: Falls Park project timeline 1960-2021.




* Yost, R. (2021, February 26). *Beauty to neglect, the quick fall of the falls: Keloland.com original on Falls Park, part 2*. KELOLAND.com. Retrieved August 25, 2021, from <https://www.keloland.com/keloland-com-original/beauty-to-neglect-the-quick-fall-of-the-falls-keloland-com-original-on-falls-park-part-2/>.





Project Budget



Because this case is an analysis of many projects related to a location, there is not a comprehensive record of a total project budget or financial spending. The two latest projects proposed for Falls Park however are mentioned. The Jacobson Plaza project, which features the ice-skating rink, is estimated at \$4 million in total shared between a private donor and the City of Sioux Falls. The most recently proposed project, the Sioux Steel downtown redevelopment project has been estimated to cost \$200 million. This project is being constructed by a private developer. However, the developer has applied for TIF to support project costs.

Current Project Status

PARK AMENITIES	PHOTO	CURRENT STATUS
Trail System		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Falls Park Trail (1 mile) Big Sioux River Recreation Trail and Greenway (34 miles)

	 <p>View from the tower. (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department. https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All skill levels ○ Fix it stations ○ Nearby parking ○ 8-foot sidewalks ○ The River Greenway
Lighting	 <p>Winter Wonderland. (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department. https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Decorative post lights ● LED ● High-mast lighting ● Decorative seasonal lighting ● Falls spotlights ● String lights ● Outlets
Historic Preservation	 <p>"Overlook Cafe". (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department. https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Light and Power Company Building - Falls Overlook Café ● Millrace and Dam overlook ● Horse Barn - Stockyards Ag Experience ● The old Queen Bee Mill location
Sight Viewing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At least five lookout spots are located in view of the waterfall. ● More lookout spots scattered throughout the River Greenway Trail

		
Street System	 <p><i>Falls Park parking lot. Google Street View. (2021)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking lots • New roads connecting to downtown • Signage • Streetscape
Signage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic signage • Educational signage • Visitor information • Wayfinding
Restrooms		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restroom facilities throughout the park and along the trail system
Bridges		

	 <p><i>View from the east bank. (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department.</i> https://www.sioxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park</p>	<p>Pedestrian bridges are part of the trail and sidewalk system.</p>
Playground	 <p><i>Playground and Restrooms Near Open Air Shelter. (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department.</i> https://www.sioxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park</p>	<p>Playground equipment located near the visitor center</p>
Built Structures	 <p><i>Farmers Market. (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department.</i> https://www.sioxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park</p>	<p>Open-air shelter community events, i.e., Farmers Market</p>
Visitor Center		

	 <p><i>Public Observation Tower. (2021). City of Sioux Falls Parks Department.</i> https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor information • Merchandise for sale • Restrooms • 50-ft Observation tower • Open year-round
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Table 5: Falls Park Current Project Status.

* Falls Park City of Sioux Falls South Dakota. (2021). Retrieved August 12, 2021, from <https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/parks/locations/falls-park>.

Case Analysis

Considering the project background, timeline, budget, and current status of Falls Park, the following will provide an analysis of this NABCD project, how it meets the successful components identified in the NABCD framework and recommendations for how this project could be improved upon. This case should also only be considered as an example of NABCD and not the only way to successfully replicate the principles of NABCD in a community.

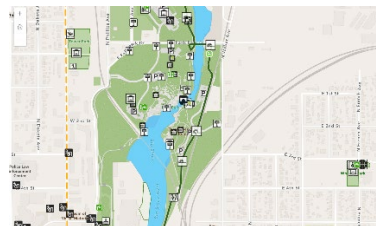
Identified Successful Outcomes

As identified previously, there are five successful components attributed to the NABCD framework. These are:

- **Planning for Natural Assets**
- **Engaging Necessary Partners**
- **Natural Assets Inventory**
- **Natural Asset Protection/Preservation**
- **Place-Based Focus**

These components are necessary steps communities must address during the planning process of a NABCD project. Although not all are required, projects that consider each of these components are often proven to experience more of the potential outcomes associated with NABCD (see page 53). As stated previously, these five components are themes that were pulled from the North Fork Riverfront and Falls Park cases and were identified as successful components of both of these projects. The following examination will show where each of the five successful components is found in the Falls Park case and examine how they are attributed to the overall success of the project. Therefore, supporting that the NABCD framework is an effective community development tool.

To analyze how this project is a successful application of the NABCD framework, each of the five identified components will be applied to this case, and metrics of measurement will be used to prove how each successful component was achieved. This analysis will prove the validity of the NABCD framework and its components, as well as potential outcomes associated with NABCD projects.

Successful Components	Description	Metrics	Sioux Falls	
			Achieved	Example
Planning for Natural Assets	A community's comprehensive plan and other strategic plans are the roadmaps that support its vision and goals. As a potential community development tool, natural assets are a priority communities should incorporate in their strategic planning efforts. By doing so, communities guarantee future action on these items that align with growth potential, as well as hold themselves accountable to invest in its natural assets.	<p>Presence of strategic goal setting, planning, or an established vision for natural assets in an approved community plan. The following are examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Plan • Master Plan • Transportation Plan • Strategic Plan • Etc. 	X	<p>Shape Sioux Falls 2040 Comprehensive Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1: Goals and Vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goal #3: Improve the Sustainability of the Community • Chapter 5: Shape Places <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Streetscape - Multi-modal access and transportation, - Open Space, - Other policy proposals that are sprinkled throughout (parks, streets, walkability, etc.).
Engaging Necessary Partners	NABCD requires a highly invested group of partners, organizations, and associations to successfully complete a project. These partners could come from areas of public health, recreation, conservation, energy use and generation, transportation, tourism, economic development, and so on. In this way, NABCD also strengthens community relationships by engaging a multitude of partners and resources, ultimately strengthening local economies and community support networks.		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RISE • Experience Sioux Falls • Sioux Falls Development Foundation • Greater Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce • Etc.
Natural Assets Inventory	Building from the first successful component – planning for natural assets – a natural asset inventory assists in the long-term strategic planning of natural assets in community development and provides a tangible tool for communities to use when practicing NABCD in their place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify natural assets • Record existing conditions • Establish threats, weaknesses, strengths, and opportunities of each natural asset • Create a tangible inventory to document these data. 	X	 <p>https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/bike</p>

Natural Asset Protection/Preservation	NABCD projects can only be NABCD if they put preservation above development. To successfully implement a NABCD project, the environmental integrity of a natural asset or assets must be maintained. This can create a conflict between development and preservation during a project. However, striking a balance is key to optimizing the benefits of both of these sides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Infrastructure • Carbon off-set • Public Education • Vegetative Buffer Goals • Reuse & Rehabilitate Materials 	+	<p>River Greenway trail corridor greenbelt preservation effort.</p> <p>There could be more effort to specifically identify preservation goals and strategies that prioritize natural assets over development.</p>
Place-Based Approach	The premise of the place-based approach, especially when dealing with rural development, is that creating local development strategies that capitalize on local uniqueness will enable territories to develop products and services matched to local assets, which can create a niche market in the increasingly globalized markets of modern times.		X	Falls Park is a unique local asset the community has turned into a community development tool to share its brand and identity internally and externally.

Table 6: Falls Park NABCD Framework Application.

X: Indicates the Component has been successfully applied in the case

+: Indicates the Component has been started but does not meet the metric of success, meaning more should be done for this component.

Planning for Natural Assets

A community's comprehensive plan is the roadmap that supports its vision and goals. City leaders and community members identify short-term and long-term goals in this plan that support the community's overall vision for its future. Goals included in a comprehensive plan can help a city secure potential fundings needs, resources, and partnerships that are required for achieving this vision. Without a strategic comprehensive plan and list of goals, cities are left with no guidance for future community development work. No comprehensive plan essentially means no vision. Therefore, identifying specific goals and priorities and including them in this plan is vital for future community growth.

As a potential community development tool, natural assets are a priority communities should consider in their comprehensive planning efforts. This successful component of NABCD requires cities to plan for natural assets in their community, identify the current conditions of those natural assets, and create a vision for how they plan to invest in those assets. In the case of the Falls Park Development project, the city has made a concerted effort to incorporate more natural assets into its long-term planning methods.

Shape Sioux Falls 2040 Plan is the community's long-range comprehensive plan. It was last updated in the summer of 2019. In this plan, the city mentions natural assets numerous times as part of its overall vision and goals for the future of the community. One of the major goals identified in the

plan's vision was Goal #3: Improve the Sustainability of the Community. Objectives under this goal are Objective 3A—Environmental Stewardship, Objective 3B—Economic Health, and Objective 3C—Social Equity. These three objectives are known as the 3E's of sustainability. For decades most communities focused solely on the economic side. However, Sioux Falls has placed environmental stewardship on equal playing field as economic and social. And this has paid off in the outcomes experienced from the continued success of Falls Park and the surrounding downtown area.

Another example of planning for natural assets in the 2040 Sioux Falls Comprehensive Plan is Chapter 5: Shaping Places. In this chapter, the plan presents an outline for future land use and development strategies for the community of Sioux Falls. Aspects relating to NABCD under this chapter include Streetscape, Multi-modal access and transportation, Open Space, and other policy proposals that are sprinkled throughout (parks, streets, walkability, etc.).

Based on the prevalence of natural assets throughout the Shape Sioux Falls 2040 Plan, Sioux Falls has established itself as a NABCD community. The examples presented above indicate the successful completion of the first NABCD framework component.

Engaging Necessary Partners

Natural asset based community development requires a highly invested group of partners, organizations, and associations to successfully complete a project. These partners could come from areas of public health, recreation, conservation, energy use and generation, transportation, tourism, economic development, and so on. In this way, NABCD also strengthens community relationships by engaging a multitude of partners and resources, ultimately strengthening local economies and community support networks.

Sioux Falls' Falls Park project began as a community volunteer project. With the help of RISE and its founder, O'Connor, Falls Park has become a regional tourist destination centered. As the city continues to develop this project, engaging a multitude of partners is vital to securing its long-term vision for Falls Park. Now that the city has invested in the infrastructure of Falls Park, it has positioned itself as a catalyst for adjacent community development. This has assisted in the effort of engaging a wider variety of partners and stakeholders, as well as has improved public engagement and education about the natural asset.

Building partnerships is seemingly an obvious step in successful community development. However, it must be emphasized here because of the circumstances surrounding NABCD. Natural assets are far-reaching and their impacts beyond community boundaries. Therefore, this initiates the need to include not only community partners, but also regional partners. Natural assets are also somewhat governed by state and federal agencies. Making it necessary to include the appropriate department associated with a particular natural asset at each of these levels when it is required. As stated previously, natural assets impact a wide range of community issues. Therefore, communities must identify all necessary partners who are invested in those issues, but who also can contribute to the project's success. This includes offering funding sources but also advocating for the project and its successful completion.

Partnerships, on top of providing needed funding and support for projects, can also act as a source for public engagement and feedback on NABCD projects. When necessary partners are engaged, they can reach out to their support base and educate them on the proposed project. This creates more avenues for public feedback but also helps to promote the project to a wider audience. Seeking partner or stakeholder feedback on a project can also prevent any missteps from happening regarding not addressing particular issues.

Such partnerships are essential to meeting the needs of the public as well as improving the final project results. Based on the background of this project, it is clear Sioux Falls has successfully accomplished the engagement of necessary partners.

Natural Asset Inventory

Building from the first successful component – planning for natural assets – a natural asset inventory assists in the long-term strategic planning of natural assets in community development and provides a tangible tool for communities to use when practicing NABCD in their place.

Sioux Falls has provided a successful example of how this type of inventory can be used in future community development work. On the City’s Parks Department website, there is an ArcGIS map that acts as the natural asset inventory for the community. On this map, park amenities and other natural assets are illustrated with icons. A snap of this map overlooking Falls Park is depicted below.

City of Sioux Falls Recreational Trails

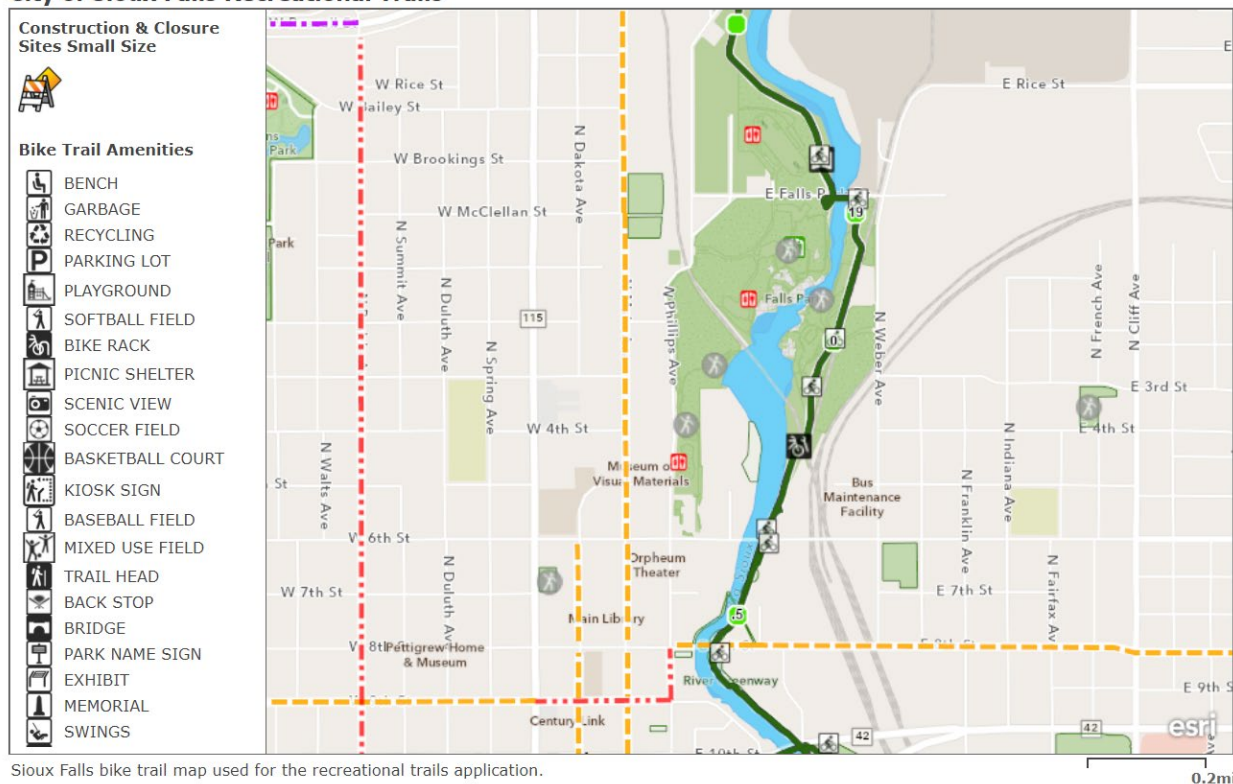


Image 12: Sioux Falls Parks Department Recreation Trails Map. (2021). <https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/bike>

This advanced form of asset mapping allows for communities to visualize where their natural assets are located in the community, as well as the current condition and features of those natural assets. There is potential to continue building upon this tool, however, this will be covered in the “Recommendations” chapter of this plan.

Natural Asset Protection/Preservation

NABCD projects can only be NABCD if they put preservation above development. To successfully implement a NABCD project, the environmental integrity of a natural asset or assets must be

maintained. This can create a conflict between development and preservation during a project. However, striking a balance is key to optimizing the benefits of both of these sides.

Although Sioux Falls has a basic inventory of natural assets and incorporates them into their long-term planning, there are no specific goals around preservation found in any established community plans or projects. Acknowledging natural assets is the first step in this process, but action must be followed up to guarantee the successful completion of NABCD.

However, Sioux Falls' past work to incorporate a greenbelt along the Big Sioux River should be recognized as a significant effort to prioritize natural assets over development. This could be a first place to start for the community: continue the preservation of this greenbelt, grow the amount of land preserved within this area, and invest in more of the natural assets found inside the greenbelt.

As mentioned previously there are a handful of strategies presented in this plan that communities can utilize to prioritize preservation over development. These are not the only strategies communities can implement to preserve natural assets during community development projects. However, the following are an identified list provided in this plan:

- **Green Infrastructure** – The inclusion of green infrastructure into design plans for development projects, including streets, commercial buildings, sidewalks, community facilities, etc.
- **Carbon offset** – This is the act of sequestering or reducing the total carbon emissions made in a community that were used somewhere else, like on a development project.
- **Public Education** – Actively engaging the public on natural assets in the community, how they can preserve/protect them, and how they can learn more about them, particularly for those natural assets used in a development project. This engagement can happen during the planning stages, be featured at the final site of a project, or be accessed online via a website or social media.
- **Vegetative Buffer Goals** – Projects should develop vegetative buffer goals to achieve in the designing and construction of a development project. For example, 10% of the property's square footage will be designated for trees and other vegetation.
- **Reuse and Rehabilitate Materials** – The reuse and rehabilitation of existing materials can offset project costs while also mitigating future carbon emissions that would've been used to develop new material for a project.

Specific steps under each of these strategies can be found on page 15.

Place-Based Approach

Along with the source of this project, Falls Park, being rooted in place, the partnerships and outcomes are as well. Local agencies and changemakers are the primary drivers of the project's momentum. The investment from local agencies and partners has allowed this project to go from vision to reality. According to Rosanna Salvia and Giovanni Quaranta's journal article, "Place-Based Rural Development and Resilience: A Lesson from a Small Community",

"The premise of the place-based approach, especially when dealing with rural development, is that creating local development strategies that capitalize on local uniqueness will enable territories to develop products and services matched to local assets, which can create a niche market in the increasingly globalized markets of modern times. Local assets can be fixed attributes which policy intervention can in truth do little to change, e.g., physical geography, climate, natural resources, previous infrastructure investment, population structure, or more malleable attributes which can certainly be modified, e.g., leadership capacity, community ties, and quality of local governance," (Salvia & Quaranta, 2017).

Falls Park is what makes Sioux Falls unique. No other community has the same assets Sioux Falls has, particularly the same natural assets. The community has successfully capitalized on this natural asset and transformed it into a brand for the community. This brand has become a catalyst for a bustling tourist industry, retail growth, unique entertainment and food experiences, and new business and people attraction efforts. Ultimately, Sioux Falls has successfully achieved the metrics of success for the place-based approach component of NABCD.

Chapter Four: Recommendations

The recommendations provided in this section will guide NCF in its effort to implement NABCD into its organization and statewide network. Although this approach is titled NABCD in this plan and is presented as a novel community development approach, the general concept of investing in natural assets is not new. This plan does not claim ownership of this community development approach. However, it recognizes the special application of this approach to rural communities and specifically those within the NCF network. This plan also uniquely attributes natural assets to community development rather than to more traditional approaches, ie climate change, economics, conservation, etc.

The recommendations provided in this plan offer a beginner's approach to NABCD and should not be considered the only way to implement NABCD in a place. NCF and its community foundation funds are encouraged to build off of this framework but to also put their spin on NABCD.

NABCD Furthering the NCF Mission

NCF bases its entire community development work around one mindset – think and dream abundantly. This concept is the foundation for a localized community movement called Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). According to NCF's website, "ABCD is a community development practice rooted abundance. Instead of the common deficit-based approach often embraced by nonprofits, ABCD focuses on the strengths communities already possess. NCF's premise is that every community has more potential resources than any one person knows," (NebraskaHometown.org, 2020). All of the community development projects that happen within the NCF network are powered by local leaders and fueled by local dollars. Their mission is centered around the belief that everything communities need to prosper is right there in their place, just waiting to be unleashed. Because of NCF's dedication to uplifting the assets already present in Nebraska hometowns, it is easy for its leadership to see natural assets fitting into that premise.

NCF is continuously adapting and offering its community foundation funds new opportunities to invest in their place. This includes grant opportunities, development programs, training, and educational resources, as well as peer-to-peer learning sessions. This continuous education has allowed community foundation funds with NCF to create real change in their place. This includes projects such as early childhood development centers, the Closing the Homework Gap grant opportunity, the Connecting Elders with Family project, the Youth Survey, newly built community centers, and the Hometown Internship program. All of these projects/programs have propelled communities to new heights, allowing them to see even more of what is possible in their place. This work has also advanced the NCF mission which states, "We unleash abundant local assets, inspire charitable giving, and connect ambitious people to build stronger communities and a Greater Nebraska," (NebraskaHometown.org, 2020).

Based on the results presented in the case study portion of this plan and the establishment of the NABCD framework, communities affiliated with NCF can expect similarly positive results when they invest in their place's natural assets.

Existing Conditions

Nebraska Community Foundation is an officially accredited member of the Council on Foundations. This seal confirms that NCF has met the standards expected of a legitimate community foundation, including strict financial transparency and security for the communities it serves. It is governed by a board of directors who volunteer their time leading the group. As a community foundation, NCF is driven by the local charitable giving that happens in Nebraska hometowns. These funds are committed to empowering their local communities and helping them to achieve their goals. NCF

approaches their affiliated funds with the mindset of “guide from the side”. This means NCF does not play a direct role in the projects implemented in a place. However, their resources, mentorship, and guidance assist local community foundations in deciding what projects to invest in and how to properly use the funds they have raised themselves.

As a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, NCF benefits from its tax-free status in many ways. This has allowed the foundation to build over \$180 million in total assets with \$116 million in endowed assets, as of its 2020 Annual Report. This achievement is made possible from the nearly 300 affiliated funds within the foundation’s network that work continuously to raise funds in their place. The organization also hit a record high for total grants and disbursements given in a fiscal year during 2020.

Another major milestone accomplished in the fiscal year 2020 was the achievement of \$50 million in unrestricted endowments for community-based affiliated funds. Figure 18 below shows this growth in endowment-building starting from 2012 to 2020. For community foundations, unrestricted endowments are one of the most valuable sources for building community wealth. In its 2020 Annual Report, NCF shared “Today, of the 78 community-based affiliated funds building unrestricted endowments, 44 are generating at least \$10,000 in annual payout. That’s money that can be used every year to experiment with new technologies or programs to enhance economic prosperity, education, health, and wellbeing in communities of all sizes. Or, as happened in 2020, the payout can be used to meet immediate needs caused by an unforeseen threat like the COVID-19 pandemic.”

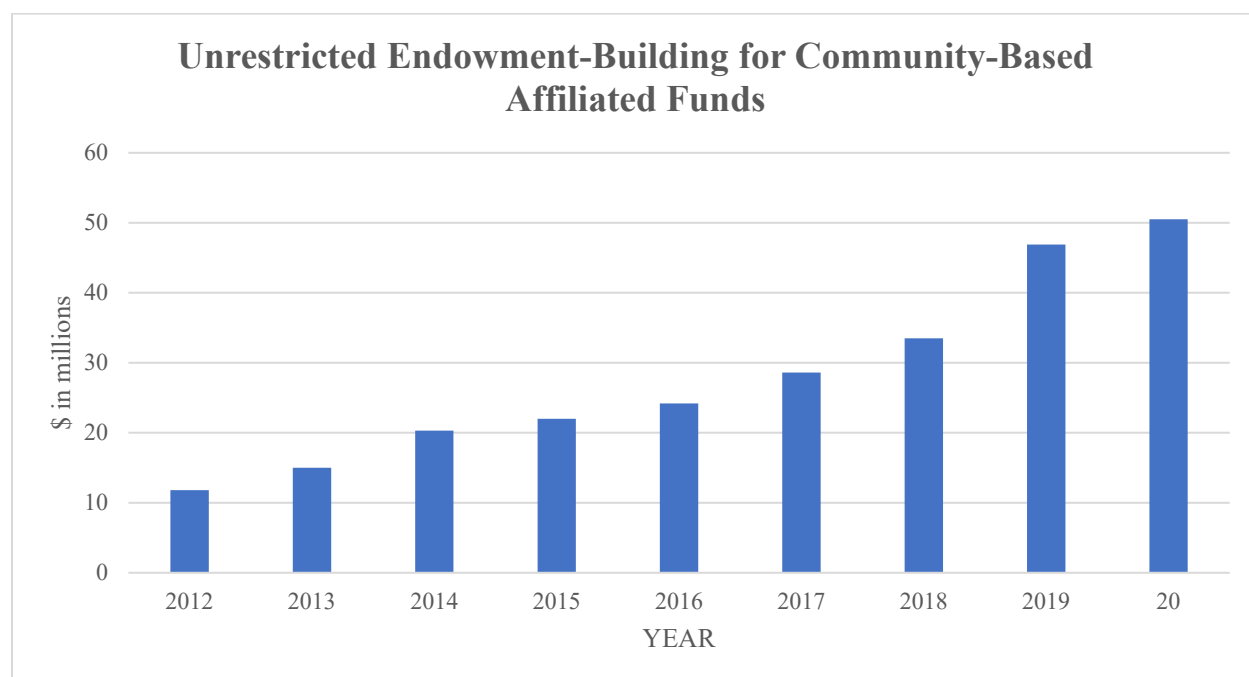


Table 7: Unrestricted Endowment-Building for Community-Based Affiliated Funds. (2020). Nebraska Community Foundation 2020 Annual Report.

To better serve its affiliated funds and the continued growth of the network’s assets, NCF adopted a strategic framework in 2019 that includes 6 strategic goals to measure the foundation’s impact and success. These goals are not just for NCF, but for its entire network of affiliated funds and volunteers. NCF’s entire network is made up of 244 affiliated funds, 82 counties, 1,500 volunteers,

and serves nearly 300 Nebraska communities. In all of these places, NCF is practicing these strategic goals to help build community wealth, whether that be in funds, people, or assets.

NABCD Framework Recommendations

The recommendations provided in this plan are based primarily on the established framework of NABCD. Because this framework is supported by successful case studies, existing literature, and data used in the case study analysis, its integration into NCF's network is the foundation for the future success of any NABCD projects within the organization. The following recommendations provide specific ways NCF can begin to incorporate the NABCD framework into its work.

1. Planning for Natural Assets

The first component of the NABCD framework – Planning for Natural Assets – is also the first recommendation proposed for NCF. Creating a clear plan that actively works toward a vision is an essential step for any community or community development organization. For cities, this often comes in the form of a long-term comprehensive plan.

A community's comprehensive plan, and other strategic plans, are the roadmaps that support its vision and goals. As a potential community development tool, natural assets are a priority communities should incorporate in their strategic planning efforts. By doing so, communities guarantee future action on these items that also align with growth patterns, as well as hold themselves accountable to invest in their natural assets.

For NCF, comprehensive plans are not the typical approach to long-term planning for the organization. However, in 2018, NCF adopted a strategic framework in 2019 that includes 6 strategic goals to measure the foundation's impact and success. The six strategies outlined in this framework are:

1. Affiliated Funds have the capacity, competence, and confidence to inspire, lead, and support progress in their place.
2. Affiliated Funds are using payout from their unrestricted endowment to create positive change that otherwise may not occur.
3. People attraction is occurring in Nebraska hometowns.
4. The NCF network is diverse and inclusive
5. NCF is known for building an optimistic, confident brand for Greater Nebraska.
6. NCF has the institutional capacity and financial stability to carry out its mission.

Each of these strategies furthers the NCF mission while maintaining the resources and relationships it currently enjoys.

To effectively integrate NABCD into the long-term strategy of NCF, however, natural assets must be considered into one of these six strategies.

Because most of the organization's program efforts are encompassed under the "People Attraction is Occurring in Nebraska Hometowns", this plan recommends natural assets and NABCD be adopted into this strategy. As described by NCF, "People Attraction is Occurring in Nebraska Hometowns" is a strategy that focuses on community development issues and opportunities that relate to retaining and recruiting residents to Greater Nebraska through meaningful quality of life initiatives. This includes the Hometown Internship program with NCF which allows college students to return to their hometown during summer break and work with local community foundation fund leaders to complete a project that supports the foundation's work and allows the interns to grow professionally

right at home. Other NCF interests and projects that fall under this strategy include the annual Youth Survey, the Dream Switch event, diversity and inclusion, workforce development, and more.

NABCD, as mentioned before, impacts a wide array of community issues – public health, transportation, quality of life, youth, tourism, recreation, etc. It also plays a vital role in maintaining and attracting residents to a community. In recent years it has become clear, people can work from almost anywhere. The answer communities, particularly rural communities, need to answer is “Why here?”. Natural assets are unique to every place. With the proper investments in these assets, communities can offer residents something they can’t get anywhere else. For example, in the two case studies, both communities have seen a reinvigoration to their downtowns, in the form of new business, developer interest, new residential opportunities, increased local sales, and new tourism opportunities. All because of progress made on the NABCD projects in their place.

For communities affiliated with NCF to also experience this kind of reinvigoration, strategic planning for incorporating natural assets into their community development work is the first step. NCF can assist communities in this effort by adding natural assets and NABCD to the third strategy of their Strategic Framework – “People Attraction is Occurring in Nebraska Hometowns”.

2. Engaging Necessary Partners

With new investment opportunities, come new potential partnerships. As NCF widens its community development approach, it opens the door to building new relationships with partners who share a similar vision. Leveraging these partnerships can lead to expanded resources and opportunities for NCF and its entire community network.

Many of these partnerships exist in the communities NCF serves. Agencies such as public health districts, hospital foundations, natural resource districts, Keep Nebraska Beautiful community groups and others are all organizations dedicated to building healthy and environmentally sustainable communities. Community funds can build relationships with these organizations to assist in the development of new programs, grant and funding sources, and new fund accounts dedicated to NABCD projects.

Another potential partnership for funds to capitalize on is with their local school(s). In recent years, the USDA Farm To School program has seen renewed interest among school leaders. The federal program allows schools to apply for a grant with the USDA to fund the building, sustaining, and educating around local, healthy food systems. Burwell High School in Burwell, Nebraska was recently awarded the USDA’s largest Farm to School grant in its history. The school was awarded over \$37,000 to construct a greenhouse where food would be grown by students and staff and ultimately added to the cafeteria menu. Students would also be able to take a course focused on food and health nutrition, where they can learn the benefits of growing their food, eating local, and the health impacts of fresh food versus processed food. Although the Calamus Area Foundation Fund, the NCF community foundation fund in the Burwell area, was not a part of this grant application, there is still abundant opportunity to partner with the school going forward on this project.

Partnering with schools can open the door to making numerous NABCD investments. Not only does this support a community’s local environment, but it also exposes youth to a relationship with nature early in life. This ultimately will create more environmentally conscious citizens who will hopefully return to Nebraska hometowns to put down their roots someday. Leading to a future of Greater

Nebraska communities who value their natural environment and all the assets it has to offer their hometown.

Notably, there are also extensive partners that exist outside of the NCF network or even outside of a community. Such partners include state departments and agencies, other non-profit organizations, private businesses, and individuals as potential donors.

As a non-profit community development organization, expanding its network of advocates and supporters is fundamental to the future success of NCF. By promoting more NABCD programming within its network, NCF can attract new partners and investors who are also passionate about the environment and natural assets, thereby expanding its support base.

3. Natural Asset Inventory

In its ABCD work, NCF uses a tool they call asset mapping to discover what the assets are that communities have to offer. One challenge with practicing ABCD is recognizing assets that often go unseen. How do we see the hidden potential of our place when we have been here for so long? But discovering these assets unleashes new growth opportunities. Natural assets are a common hidden asset overlooked by community members. The same river has flowed through town since the very beginning. How would we see it any differently?

This is where an asset inventory tool comes in handy for community funds. “Asset mapping is a way to start taking a deeper look at the people, places, and organizations that make a community strong, and to leverage those strengths to help mobilize people, build stronger relationships and associations, and help bring community dreams to life,” (NCF Asset Mapping Toolkit 2021). Asset mapping offers a baseline approach to quantifying and qualifying community assets into a tangible or intangible product, sometimes in the form of a list or graph. These lists can offer communities inspiration and visualization for where invisible opportunities lie in their place. For example, an art club may be very interested in the old Opera House that has been dormant for years. Both of these are individual community assets. But together, they can create change.

Asset mapping, as mentioned, however, can be very complicated and challenging for residents. Particularly for those who have lived in a community all their life. The potential and newness of some assets have faded with time and can become difficult to recognize.

To help communities with practicing asset mapping, NCF created an Asset Mapping Toolkit. NCF describes its Asset Mapping Toolkit as “a conversation guide, not a survey. It is a resource that will walk alongside you as you continue to unlock the potential of asset mapping and develop a deeper understanding of practical ways it can be used to help FACs (fund advisory committees) be opportunistic, make the invisible visible, and leverage the goodness they uncover to begin to question what’s truly possible. It also exists to offer NCF staff ongoing support when assisting a FAC with asset mapping,” (NCF Asset Mapping Toolkit 2021). The examples above are all diverse results from practicing asset mapping. Although tangible products like these illustrations are helpful, NCF believes it is equally important to remember that the most impactful way to discover what your place has to offer is by inviting, conversing, and learning from others in our community. How can the new resident and the existing resident come together to describe the assets they see in their community?

In its future asset mapping work, and as NCF continues to share this toolkit, this plan proposes that NCF include natural assets in this practice. Natural assets, as stated previously, are abundant in rural

communities. This presents an opportunity for rural places to properly inventory the quantity and quality of natural assets in their community. For example, if communities mapped every tree in their downtown area, they may recognize a need for more trees or better maintenance of those existing trees.

There is also the potential to convert such asset maps into a geographic information system (GIS). This would provide a new level of understanding for the visualization of community natural assets as it relates to land development, proximity, and environmental review. An example of an ArcGIS asset map can be found below. This inventory was provided by the community of Sioux Falls, SD, and is used by their Park Department.

City of Sioux Falls Recreational Trails

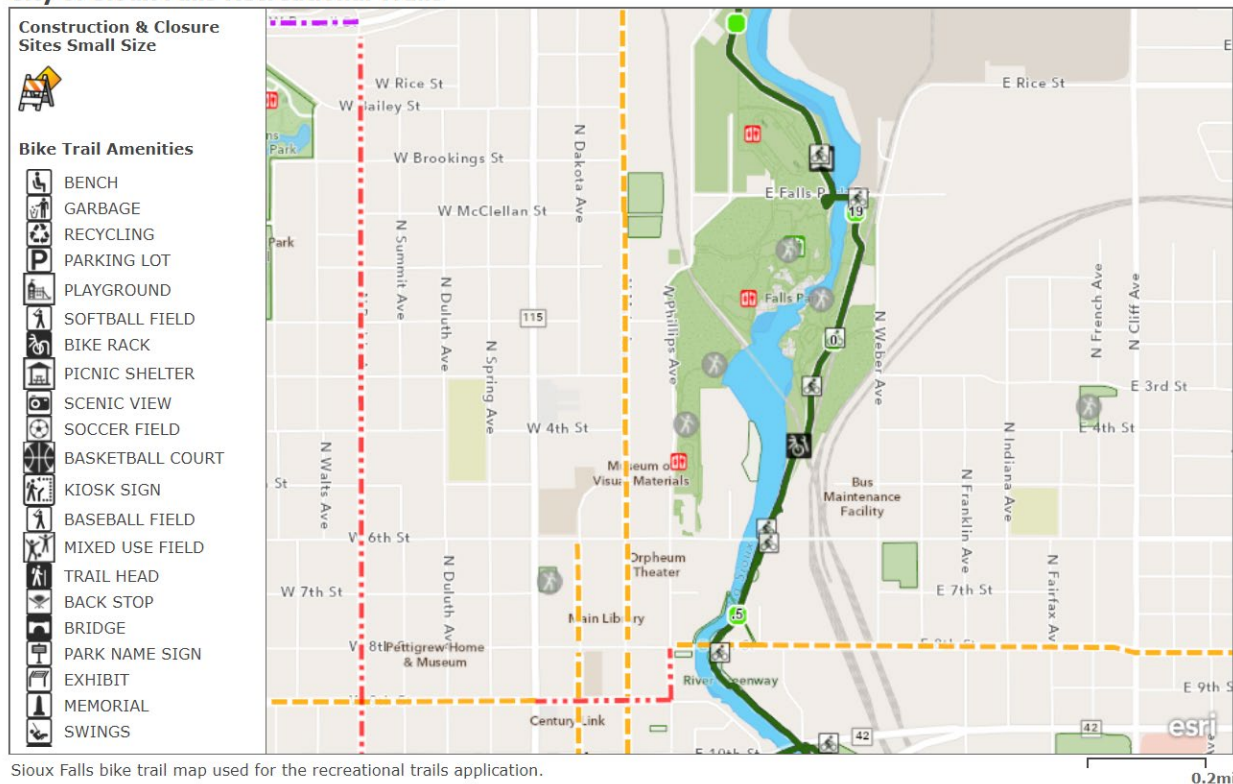


Image 13: Sioux Falls Parks Department Recreation Trails Map. (2021). <https://www.siouxfalls.org/parks/bike>

In this asset map, the Parks Department has identified assets within Falls Parks. These include trails, playgrounds, signage, visitor center, parking, bike stations, pedestrian bridges, etc. They have done this for the entire community of Sioux Falls and all of its public parks. Utilizing this GIS tool for parks is just one-way communities can benefit from mapping out their natural assets.

This plan recommends NCF create a pilot program with a few selected communities to test this product in their place. Communities can create an inventory of any natural assets they would like, such as trees, rivers, trails, community gardens, green spaces, parks, etc. Then the community foundation fund can use this information to help guide their program and project development. Perhaps a fund will notice a poor trail system in their community via this tool and take it upon themselves to fund a new trail construction project. This is just one example of how this valuable tool can be used as a NABCD project.

Project/Program Recommendations

The framework recommendations presented previously are just a start to how NCF can apply the principles of NABCD into their community development work. The following recommendation is a specific program/project NCF can integrate into its network as a way for community foundation funds to also participate in the benefits of NABCD.

4. Local Food and Healthy Food Systems

When looking for a first step toward practicing NABCD for NCF and its network, local food systems are a great place for communities to start. It is often simple enough with multiple avenues to approach it from. For instance, community gardens, food donation programs, healthy meal prepping for families, constructing a greenhouse at the school, bringing Double Up Food Bucks, WIC, or other food programs to local grocery stores, a local beef day at school, and so on.

The basis of much of NCF's ABCD practices is centered around three simple steps: Invitation, Conversation, and Connection. What better way to have meaningful conversations about hometowns than over a healthy meal? This plan recommends community funds start here when first beginning their work with NABCD.

Another reason to start with local foods is the availability of grants and funds. The federal and state government both offer ample funding for developing local food programs in schools. For example, the USDA's Farm to School program is a highly successful federal grant program that awards funds to schools that apply by creating a strategic plan that details how they intend to use grant dollars to support the incorporation of local, healthy food into their school district. Mentioned previously was the example of how Burwell, Nebraska received the USDA's largest Farm to School grant ever awarded, simply because they dreamed big enough to ask.

The impact of local food extends far beyond the classroom, however. Community funds can inspire resiliency within their community by establishing community gardens that support households in their area. There is a philanthropic opportunity also to come from challenging community members to grow just 10% more than what they already are and to donate that 10% to those in their community who need it. Or to create a cost-share program to help residents or groups start their own gardens and portions of their produce can be reserved for donation. Farmers' markets partnered with these community gardens can also be a great way for community funds to gain revenue from their harvests.

The opportunities around local foods are almost endless in rural communities. Introducing this as a program or as a guideline to creating local food grants is an excellent first step for NCF and its community funds to take toward practicing NABCD.

Chapter Five: Anticipated Outcomes

Assessing potential outcomes to come as a result of NABCD will further prove its significant impact on rural community development and as a successful community development tool. A couple of these potential outcomes will be pulled from the previously analyzed case studies. The outcomes from the two case studies will be analyzed in this chapter to prove the impact the NABCD projects in those places had on the local economy and community development strategies. Other potential NABCD outcomes will also be presented. These other potential outcomes do not have their own specific case study to prove their validity. However, both Norfolk and Sioux Falls have experienced some or most of these other potential outcomes to an extent in their community.

Increased Local Sales Tax Revenue – Norfolk, NE

In recent years, Norfolk has invested a significant amount of its time and resources to finally initiate the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project – a community development project that has been on the city’s mind for decades. As mentioned previously, the project has met almost every successful component of the NABCD framework, and the city continues to make this project a priority for its future community development work. As a result, this investment has already begun to pay itself off before it has even broken ground.

Sales tax revenue is an effective way of indicating community growth because of its relation to industry growth, population growth, new business, and tourism growth. Sales tax revenue is the income directed to the local city government based on a percentage taken from local retail and commercial sales within the city limits. Increased sales tax receipts can be an indicator of how much local spending and purchasing has either increased or decreased, as well as new market opportunities and businesses in the area that offer consumers more variety in retail and shopping needs. In the case of the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project, sales tax receipts since the project first started taking off in 2017 have significantly increased in the community. Based on this increase and its connection to the Riverfront project, sales tax increases can be identified as a potential outcome associated with NABCD projects.

The following will provide an assessment of sales tax receipts from the years 2016 to 2021 for the city of Norfolk. The most recent momentum for the North Fork Riverfront project began in 2017, with the initial step of creating a Riverfront Overlay District and the completion of the city’s latest comprehensive plan which acknowledged the river as a community asset. This assessment begins in the year 2016 to analyze a standard sales tax revenue year for the city before any work on the project. This will help to assess the difference between before the Riverfront project and after the Riverfront project. The data used in this assessment was acquired from the City of Norfolk Financial Officer, Randy Gates on September 22, 2021.

PAYMENT	
DATE	2016
October	\$676,884.35
November	\$639,696.03
December	\$650,060.03
January	\$642,697.76
February	\$800,623.67
March	\$566,286.90
April	\$585,739.56
May	\$671,526.42
June	\$640,120.58
July	\$662,828.95
August	\$711,339.14
September	\$672,064.20
TOTAL	\$7,919,867.58

From the table on the left, it is clear the highest months for sales tax receipts in the year 2016, one year before the project's inception, were February and August. This is fairly consistent with most fiscal years for cities considering February is when most individuals receive their tax returns and August is the month when school returns from summer vacation. Both of these times of the year usually see an increase in household spending either from recent revenue from a tax return or for needing to shop for the beginning of the school year. The total sales tax revenue for the year 2016 was just short of \$8 million.

The following will provide an assessment of how recent investments in the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project stimulated local sales tax revenue for the city from the years 2017 – 2021.

Table 8: City of Norfolk Sales Tax Revenue. (2016).

PAYMENT					
DATE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
October	\$691,047.65	\$678,401.87	\$749,907.08	\$791,667.22	\$807,699.88
November	\$666,760.27	\$654,681.26	\$693,592.86	\$773,622.59	\$798,022.46
December	\$663,578.12	\$651,260.81	\$688,673.25	\$760,004.07	\$815,440.55
January	\$672,893.22	\$705,769.95	\$722,650.88	\$743,508.54	\$821,520.19
February	\$797,267.30	\$799,180.83	\$812,345.69	\$887,425.53	\$950,153.16
March	\$579,854.82	\$610,326.58	\$632,492.20	\$633,342.26	\$774,090.95
April	\$569,141.80	\$575,250.20	\$606,371.26	\$725,373.93	\$719,690.10
May	\$703,172.86	\$690,707.66	\$712,360.98	\$733,041.40	\$943,475.10
June	\$643,402.37	\$649,735.86	\$738,010.16	\$653,114.23	\$935,611.73
July	\$670,767.34	\$785,104.37	\$761,157.69	\$750,322.72	\$883,844.67
August	\$729,884.21	\$786,723.11	\$756,686.77	\$866,997.21	\$907,083.35
September	\$645,165.09	\$734,838.03	\$748,664.90	\$857,175.30	\$951,421.42
TOTAL	\$8,032,935.04	\$8,321,980.52	\$8,622,913.72	\$9,175,595.00	\$10,308,053.56

Table 9: City of Norfolk Sales Tax Revenue. (2017 - 2021).

It should be recognized that the North Fork Riverfront Redevelopment project cannot be singularly attributed to this massive increase in sales tax revenue. However, it cannot be ignored that the timing of the project, as well as its incremental progress through the years, can be almost paralleled to the increases seen in this chart.

Starting first with a comparison of 2016's top months – February and August. In 2016, these months returned totals of \$800,623.67 and \$711,339.14 respectively. February saw a decline for the next couple of years, but then a consistent increase starting in 2019 until reaching more than \$950k in 2021. This

resulted in a total increase of 18.7% from February 2016 to February 2021. Moreover, August increased 27.5% from 2016 to 2021.

However, the real story told by these numbers is not the increase in sales during usual top-performing months, but rather the significant increase in 2017 – 2021 sales during months that consistently underperformed in 2016, starting first with September. In 2016, September reported a sales tax income of \$672,064.20. By 2021, September outperformed every other month by reaching \$951,421.42 in total sales tax receipts. Close behind September 2021 was February 2021, which returned \$950,153.16.

In a yearly assessment, this data illustrates a 30.2% increase in sales tax receipts from 2016 to 2021.

Again, although this increase in local spending cannot be directly attributed to the riverfront, there is reason to believe the project is a catalyst for this economic return. Since 2016, there have been at least 15 new businesses establishing themselves along Norfolk's downtown main street – Norfolk Avenue, which is just a block south of the future project area for the Riverfront. A majority of these new businesses are considered either retail or food/entertainment. Along with new businesses, new housing opportunities have taken off in downtown Norfolk. An old, historic movie theater located just off of the main street is now being converted into an apartment building that will include a coffee shop on the main level. Another historic building with a real estate office located on the bottom floor – Real Estate Solutions Team – has also converted its second story into apartment units. The owners of the real estate company were the contractors of this new construction. Along with these newer apartment units, there are also several one-unit apartments located above businesses in the downtown area that are occupied.

Another amenity offered in its downtown is a newly constructed pocket park that was once the location of a parking lot. Riverpoint Square now offers residents and visitors a space for outdoor concerts, new farmers market location downtown, and a common space to enjoy the ambiance downtown.

All of these improvements to the downtown area directly contribute to increased sales in Norfolk. As most small to mid-sized rural communities' downtowns are struggling to stay afloat and maintain occupancy, Norfolk's Riverfront project has brought new life to the area which has spurred new business investment with 15 new small businesses in the downtown and a 30% growth in sales tax income for the entire community in just 5 years. Further research around sales tax revenue based specifically in the downtown area over this same period should be considered for future research on this NABCD project in Norfolk. Although the entire community experienced a 30% increase in five years, it would appear that most new business during this time was specifically in the downtown area. Therefore indicating most of this revenue increase would have come from this part of town; which is also directly adjacent to the Riverfront project, thereby further proving the project's impact.

Business owners have chosen Norfolk specifically for the energy they see coming from this project, especially for those who have opened their doors downtown. Before the investment in this project, Norfolk's downtown was like many other rural communities with vacant buildings and struggling small businesses. The Riverfront project has created a sense of identity and new energy in the downtown area that has attracted new business, new people, and new revenue to its community.

Population Growth Trends – Sioux Falls, SD

Another outcome resulting from a NABCD project is the population growth experienced in Sioux Falls, SD following its investments in the Big Sioux River and Falls Park. This data is provided by US Census Bureau data dating back to 1960 when the project was first initiated until the present day.

To illustrate this population growth, two charts will provide a comparison for Sioux Falls' growth over the decades as well as Lincoln, Nebraska's population growth over the same period to provide a reference

for comparison. These charts will illustrate how Sioux Falls experienced a population growth over the period it began investing in the Falls Park project, as compared to another large-sized Midwest city over the same period that did not invest in a NABCD and did not experience the same or similar population increases.

Sioux Falls, SD			
DATE	POPULATION	POPULATION GROWTH RATE % (20 year periods)	PROJECT STATUS
1960 - 1979	65,466	2.4%	Hazel O'Connor begins advocating for improvements to be made at Falls Park River Improvement Society (RISE) chartered as an official organization, begins volunteering and fundraising for Falls Park projects.
1980-1999	81,182	1.1%	The City of Sioux Falls preserves a greenbelt around the Big Sioux River and dedicates it as public park space. O'Connor died on April 18, 1985, at the age of 87. The City takes over and begins planning a long-term vision for the future of Falls Park, and began infrastructure improvements in the late 1990s.
2000 - 2019	123,975	2.1%	Infrastructure improvements are slowly made throughout the park, including roadways, sidewalks, parking lots, lighting, and preservation of existing historic buildings (Power & Light building and old mill building). Development interest grows in the nearby downtown area, sparking new business, retail, entertainment, and residential growth.
2020	192,517	2.2%	Jacobson Plaza is proposed, which includes an ice-skating rink, playground, and open-air shelter.

Table 10: Sioux Falls Population Growth Rate Timeline. (1960-2020).

* US Census Bureau Data: 1960-2020.

Lincoln, NE		
DATE	POPULATION	POPULATION GROWTH RATE % (20 year periods)
1960 - 1979	128,521	2.2%
1980-1999	171,932	1.5%
2000 -2019	227,701	1.4%
2020	291,082	1.2%

Table 11: Lincoln Population Growth Rate Timeline. (1960-2020).

* US Census Bureau Data: 1960-2020.

Indicated in the charts above are the populations of Sioux Falls, SD, and Lincoln, NE over 60 years. This chart begins in 1960 due to records indicating this was when work first started to begin on Falls Park in Sioux Falls. This chart is intended to compare the difference between two large, Midwest cities' population growth over these 60 years. Lincoln was chosen because it is the most comparable city in Nebraska in population size to Sioux Falls. Although it should be acknowledged that comparison to other Midwest cities may create different results. However, because this plan is focused on the Nebraska Community Foundation and its work in Nebraska, a comparable Nebraska city was chosen for this analysis.

As mentioned, it was in the 1960s that work first started on Falls Park, thanks in most part to Hazel O'Connor and her local advocacy in the community. Both communities of Sioux Falls and Lincoln saw almost the same population growth at this time during the early 1960s. Following and in the next twenty years, both communities saw a significant decrease in population growth with Sioux Falls experiencing only a 1.1% growth from 1960 to 1980 and the late 1990s and Lincoln experiencing 1.5% growth in the same period.

Once the early 2000s rolled around, however, the two communities begin to tell a different story of population growth. Before this time, Sioux Falls had just started to make significant investments in Falls Park's infrastructure, including lighting, sidewalks, trails, roads, parking lots, as well as many other new additions. This major construction period took place in the 1990s mostly and partially into the 2000s. Contiguously to these improvements the city saw a population growth into the 21st Century of 2.1% from the 1980s-1990s. On the other hand, the city of Lincoln experienced yet another decrease in population growth from the previous two decades. From 1960 to 1980, as mentioned previously, Lincoln had a

population growth of 1.5%. Then, from 1980 to 1999, the city saw another decrease with a population growth of only 1.5%. Then, from 2000 – 2019 Lincoln saw another decrease in population growth at 1.4%. Although these two Midwest communities are only approximately 200 miles apart, they are experiencing very different growth patterns during the early 2000s.

Finally, in 2020, Sioux Falls experienced yet another increase in population growth rate – 2.2%. Lincoln, on the other hand, saw another decrease in population growth rate, reaching only 1.2% according to 2020 US Census Bureau data.

Similar to Norfolk, one cannot say Sioux Falls' NABCD project was the direct cause of this population growth. Other factors should be considered. However, it cannot be ignored that this incremental population growth experienced in Sioux Falls was directly related to the progress made on the Falls Park project.

Similar to Norfolk, Sioux Falls' NABCD project is located near its downtown area. Since the project's inception, historic downtown Sioux Falls has transformed into a tourist and business destination. In a recent edition of the Mayor's Column that is posted on the City of Sioux Falls' website, the present mayor, Paul TenHaken, discusses the transformation downtown Sioux Falls has experienced over the last 20 years due in most part to NABCD project investments to Falls Park and the surrounding downtown area.

“There's no question that our downtown is full of vibrancy and vitality. Thanks to thoughtful planning by City and community leaders, we've seen continued progress over the past two decades in building an attractive downtown for businesses, residents, and visitors. Consider these notable public investments made over the past 20 years: Falls Park clean-up and improvements, Phillips to the Falls, Sculpture Walk, Phase 1 and 2 of the River Greenway Master Plan, railyard relocation, Levitt at the Falls, and the reopening of the historic State Theatre. Property valuations downtown have more than doubled in the past 10 years downtown because of these and other investments,” (SiouxFalls.org, 2021).

Although these projects are not identified or mentioned as being primarily natural asset-based, it is clear each of these is a prime example of NABCD at work. The mayor continues by predicting future investments totaling \$400 million to be made to the Falls Park and downtown area. With these continued investments more and more new businesses choose Sioux Falls over other large Midwest cities, and with these new businesses and new investments come new residents and visitors. Further research on the impact tourism has on growing population trends should be considered for future research on this subject, specifically with Sioux Falls as an example.

Community planners know the value of living in a place that is walkable, beautiful, and vibrant. These are qualities planners incorporate into the design and built environments for large urban areas. However, and with Sioux Falls as an example, the numbers prove that the natural assets that are already in a place, particularly in a rural place, are already sources of these highly-valuable community attributes. Sioux Falls has experienced consistent population growth through the decades because of its strategic investment into its natural assets. And, when compared to other large-Midwest cities that have not made similar investments, most cannot say they have experienced the same trend over 60 years.

Other Potential Outcomes

Other potential outcomes associated with the successful practice of NABCD have also been identified in this plan. Most of the following outcomes were also found to be present in the two case studies analyzed in this plan. These outcomes were not assessed to the same degree as sales tax increase or population growth. However, they are equally important and impactful to the overall resiliency and wealth of a community. These proposed outcomes will create their own unique result

based on the community and the NABCD project. Not all of these outcomes can be guaranteed. However, they are common in both case studies and should be recognized as part of the expansive benefits to come from investing in a place's natural assets and environment as a form of community development.

Placemaking

Strong Towns, a non-profit community development organization, defines placemaking as “leveraging a community’s assets to create a strong shared identity, to connect public spaces with citizens, and to make it a better, more engaging place to live and visit. And more and more, we are starting to think of it as an economic strategy,” (Studer, 2020). Natural assets are an excellent source for spaces to build community, whether for businesses and business owners, residents, visitors, children, adults, or any other community members. Natural assets are something everyone shares in a community, and access to them provides shared opportunities to experience the community in a different way and in communion with others. Natural assets also contribute to a community’s overall identity and potential brand to market itself. Take Sioux Falls for example. The community has staked its entire brand around the falls. Logos represent the cascading water and the jagged rocks – proudly tagging the word “Falls” in almost anything branded for the community. This focused marketing approach has created a cohesive identity for the community that it can always fall back on and a theme to connect future planning, development, and economic strategies.

New business and entrepreneurship recruitment

As rural communities continue to look for new and creative ways to attract new businesses and entrepreneurs, natural assets provide another community development option for communities to explore. Small businesses and entrepreneurs are most focused on finding communities with strong local networks that can support their operation while also having access to necessary resources. In the example provided by the Norfolk case study, more than 15 new small businesses opened their doors in downtown Norfolk over the last five years. This reinvestment to business in the downtown area, specifically small business, can be attributed to the energy behind the North Fork Riverfront project which is located just a block north of the downtown. Sioux Falls also experienced a significant increase in new small businesses and entrepreneurs in their community. With the largest population age ranges in Sioux Falls being those between 20-29 and 30-39, according to 2019 US Census Bureau data, it is a good sign of healthy entrepreneurship and new business in the community.

People attraction and retention

Now that most people can work from anywhere, natural assets can be the reason people choose one community over another. More flexible work schedules have allowed residents to explore and engage in their community more. Natural assets can create more opportunities for them to connect with their place outside of working hours. Recent survey data collected from the 2021 NCF Youth survey, shows that young people, ages 13-18, have a strong sense of responsibility for their environment and prefer places that protect, preserve and promote their local environment. When asked what students would do to improve the future of their place, a majority of students focused on improving the environment and quality of their community’s appearance. Comments of cleaning up the community, planting trees and gardens, and taking care of their community’s natural assets were common responses from students. Also proven in the Sioux Falls case study is the impact natural asset investments can have on the population growth rate, even over a significant period.

Quality of Life Improvements

The old way of approaching community development was rooted in workforce development. Workforce development, workforce housing, smokestack chasing, etc. These were all traditional economic development and community development tactics practiced by planners, economists, city leaders, and policymakers. However, in a time when people can work from anywhere and work-life balance is becoming more of a demand from employees rather than a pleasure, exploring more quality-of-life techniques has become the new focus in modern times. A community's connection to its natural environment can significantly improve the overall health and wellness of residents. There are numerous public health benefits to planting trees, promoting multi-modal transportation, and improving walkability in a community. Moreover, natural assets provide residents with direct access to recreational opportunities as a form of entertainment, tourism, and physical activity. The improvement to a community's esthetic through beautification is also noted as a potential outcome from investing in a place's natural assets, for example walking trails, tree planting, flower gardens, community gardens, median landscaping, and other street design, and so on. All of these improve the overall quality of life in a place and provide opportunities for residents to connect with their community, their neighbors, and themselves outside of their work schedule.

Increased regional connection and partnerships

Natural assets expand beyond community boundaries. The common phrase comes to mind and describes the interconnectedness of natural assets, "What happens upstream affects downstream." Natural assets connect neighbors, partners, cities, districts, regions, and more. When communities invest in natural assets it is not only an investment for their city, but it is also a statement to other communities, neighbors, and regional allies that they value an asset they all share. This could be soil, a river, air, food, transportation, and roads, etc. All of these and more natural assets create opportunities for connection among various groups. This ultimately expands the reach of communities, agencies, and partners, and builds relationships between groups who are invested in improving their natural assets. It also creates a greater impact for financial and resources allocated to projects and becomes a more efficient use of partners' time and effort toward improving natural assets beyond their jurisdiction.

Self-sustainability

Historically, rural communities are often used for their resources, talent, and land by larger more urban places. This has led to brain drain, industrialization of agriculture, and a decrease in landowners. Strengthening natural assets and their investments create new opportunities for rural communities to rely so heavily on urban places and what they have to offer them. Natural assets are unique rural community assets that rural communities have in abundance. In the case of Sioux Falls, the community now benefits greatly from the tourist income brought in by the falls, as well as the new businesses and residents who have migrated to the area. This, in turn, brings in new revenue to the community, making it more self-sustainable and self-reliant on the internal assets it has. Projects like the North Fork Redevelopment Project have proven to lead to more local dollars and local revenue for city governments – positioning local governments to make larger investments in the community's infrastructure and services. Slowly, this allows rural communities to rely on the assets located right in the community instead of being reliant on getting resources elsewhere – food, energy, tourism, recreation, etc.

Outcomes in the NCF Network

As a statewide community development organization, NCF is invested in the wealth, prosperity, and resiliency of Nebraska hometowns. All of the outcomes presented in this chapter are sources for community wealth and capacity-building opportunities. By introducing more NABCD work into its

network, NCF can expect its network of community foundations funds to experience these same outcomes as well as more potential outcomes that have not been identified in this plan.

The adoption of NABCD in the NCF network will also have an impact on its work as a major funding agency that is dependent upon the generosity and support of partners from all across the state and country. As stated in this plan, NABCD presents an opportunity to engage new partners, whether that be through financial support, resource allocation, or advocacy. NABCD and its potential outcomes are not only beneficial to NCF's community network, but also its future as an organization.

Chapter Six: Planning Implications

Along with outcomes associated with NABCD, there are also implications associated with this community development approach that impact the field of community planning, rural community development, and the role of community planners.

This chapter will review the perceived implications of NABCD and how it may impact each of these channels of community planning. It is expected that there are more implications to come from this practice. However, these three will be the only ones examined at this time.

Impact on the Field of Planning

In the current field of planning natural assets are often viewed through a limited lens. They are seen as liabilities for communities or in need of repair or restoration. However, Natural Asset Based Community Development proposes that natural assets be viewed through a lens of abundance rather than scarcity.

Planning often addresses natural resources as features that should be modified or constrained to serve the needs of a community. Or, natural resources are only invested in when they are contaminated or polluted. NABCD introduces a new approach to planning where natural assets are considered on equal playing field as any other community asset, i.e. infrastructure, housing, business development, workforce recruitment, etc.

By viewing natural assets as a possible community development tool, planning can contribute more value to the planning process for communities and offer a new investment opportunity for community leaders to invest in. This, ultimately, will change a wide range of planning types, for example, environmental planning, transportation planning, land use planning, long-range planning, etc.

Impact on the Role of a Planner

As a planner, there is a responsibility to best serve the people and communities they work for. Planners have an ethical and moral obligation to assist communities in future growth planning while not causing any harm or minimal harm to the existing community and environment.

Currently, as mentioned before, planners often think of natural assets as liabilities, such as in hazard mitigation, natural resource planning, infrastructure projects, etc. Planners also are often asked to step in when environmental conditions have gotten so bad that they are tasked with planning a restoration or protection plan for that resource going forward, for example, a watershed protection plan, drinking water protection, wetland delineation, etc.

However, if planners would see opportunity in natural assets from the beginning of any project, the impact would be far-reaching in the field. Although issues of climate resiliency and adaptation can vary among clients and communities. As a planner, presenting natural assets as a source for potential community development or growth can alter the way communities plan for and utilize these resources. This could also create a new side to the industry of community planning, opening doors to new business and investment opportunities as well as new jobs in the field of planning as it relates to NABCD.

Impact on Rural Planning and Community Development

Maybe of most importance to the impact of NABCD is its ability to change the way rural community development is done. For decades, rural communities have been seen and used as sources of talent, resources, and land that is soaked up by nearby urban places. For years there has been the issue of addressing rural brain drain and how it relates to the prosperity of rural communities all across the

country. Some planners and economists may say if the free market is turning away from rural communities, then we should just let it happen. Let rural communities drift away and allow suburban developments to take their place.

However, to maintain the supply and demand needed in urban places, rural communities must remain prosperous. Without the land, resources, and people that rural communities offer, urban places would be left to survive on their own. Both urban and rural offer each other something the other can't provide, and this balanced must be maintained to support the existence of either one.

Rural community development has long been an afterthought in the field of community planning. Often planners see rural places as lacking the necessary amenities and resources it takes to survive. However, natural assets pose themselves as a unique community attribute that urban places cannot replicate. When natural assets are maximized to their fullest potential as a community asset, rural communities will unleash a new potential they have not been able to reach since most of their founding.

NABCD opens the door for rural communities to offer a place-based approach to community development that is centered around promoting what they already have in abundance. Based on the potential outcomes identified with NABCD in this plan, there are endless benefits to come for rural places once they actively pursue this community development approach.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Natural assets are a highly valuable community development tool and are abundantly available in rural communities. This plan has partnered with the Nebraska Community Foundation to establish Natural Asset Based Community Development as an approach that recognizes the power of natural assets in rural community planning. In its work as a non-profit community development organization, NCF assists more than 200 Nebraska community foundations from all across the state. They provide education and training opportunities, resources, policy assistance, gift planning guides, and a virtual library full of “real-life examples of the impressive work affiliated funds are doing across the state,” (NebraskaHometowns.org, 2021), and now NABCD can be added to this extensive education and resource library for the Foundation to use and implement into its network.

This plan will be the first concentrated effort by NCF to better incorporate natural assets into its community development work in the state of Nebraska. This plan has provided NCF with a framework for NABCD, recommendations for implementation, and two case studies of communities that have successfully integrated this approach into their place. NCF intends to use this plan to assist in its future program and partnership development, as well as to guide future goal setting for the organization which prioritizes natural assets.

The case studies presented in this plan provide an analysis of how communities have successfully practiced NABCD in their place, as well as a foundation to support the NABCD framework presented in this plan. The successful components of this framework – Planning for Natural Assets, Engaging Necessary Partners, Natural Asset Inventory, Protection/Preservation, and Place-Based – each provide a necessary step toward successfully completing a NABCD project. Each of these components was accompanied by a definition, metric for success, and examples of implementation. Both cases were found to successfully complete a majority of these components but vary in their extent. These cases can be used as evidence for how communities can replicate NABCD projects in their place as well as the potential outcomes that follow natural asset investments.

The potential outcomes found to result from NABCD were presented in this plan, but they are not the only outcomes or benefits to come from natural asset investments. Norfolk and Sioux Falls both have experienced multiple outcomes from their community’s NABCD project. However, two outcomes were specifically analyzed in the two cases of Norfolk and Sioux Falls. Norfolk’s Riverfront project resulted in the stimulation of downtown business and activity, which resulted in significant increases in sales tax revenue from the project’s inception until the present day. Sioux Falls, although the community experienced more than one outcome from their Falls Park project, is an example of how a NABCD project led to consistent population growth over the decades of the project’s progression into its current state. Other potential outcomes associated with NABCD are placemaking, new business and entrepreneurship recruitment, people attraction and retention, quality of life improvements, increased regional connections and partnerships, and self-sustainability, as well as other nonidentified outcomes.

In conclusion, the potential that is to come to the NCF network by expanding its non-profit community work to include natural asset based community development can be a game-changer for rural communities and their strategic efforts to grow and maintain their places. The framework and approach established in this plan should be used as a guide in the NCF network to implement this practice into its statewide network going forward. NABCD supports not only rural communities but also the work of NCF by aligning with the organization’s belief that everything Nebraska hometowns need is already in their place.

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